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From L. Keys.

THE RAILWAY MAN

AND

HIS CHILDREN



# THE RAILWAY MAN AND HIS CHILDREN

BY  
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# THE RAILWAY MAN AND HIS CHILDREN

## CHAPTER I

THE news that Miss Ferrars was going to marry Mr. Rowland the engineer, ran through the station like wild-fire, producing a commotion and excitement which had rarely been equalled since the time of the Mutiny. Miss Ferrars! and Mr. Rowland! —it was repeated in every tone of wonder and astonishment, with as many audible notes of admiration and interrogation as would fill a whole page. “Impossible!” people said, “I don’t believe it for a moment.”—“You don’t mean to say——”. But when Mrs. Stanhope, who was Miss Ferrars’ friend, with whom she had been living, answered calmly that this was indeed what she meant to say, and that she was not very sure whether she was most sorry or glad—most pleased to think that her friend was thus comfortably established in life, or sorry that she was perhaps stepping a little out of her sphere—there remained nothing for her visitors but a universal gape of amazement, a murmur of deprecation or regret—“Oh, poor Miss Ferrars!” the ladies cried. “A lady, of such a good family, and marrying a man who was certainly not a gentleman.” “But he is a very good fellow,” the gentlemen said; and one or two of the mothers who were conscious in their hearts, though they did not say anything of the fact, that had he proposed for Edie or Ethel, they would have pushed his claims as far as legitimate pressure could go, held their tongues or said little, with a feeling that they had themselves escaped the criticism which was now so freely poured forth. They were aware indeed that it would have come upon them more hotly, for it was they who would have been blamed in the case of Ethel or Edie, whereas Miss Ferrars was responsible for herself. But the one of them who would have been most guilty, and who indeed had thought a good deal about Mr. Rowland, and considered the question very closely whether she ought not as a matter of duty to

endeavour to interest him in her Ethel, whose name was Dorothy, took up the matter most hotly, and declared that she could not imagine how a lady could make up her mind to such a descent. "Not a gentleman: why, he does not even pretend to be a gentleman," said the lady, as if the pretension would have been something in his favour. "He is not a man even of any education. Oh I know he can read and write and do figures—all those surveyor men can. Yes, I call him a surveyor—I don't call him an engineer. What was he to begin with? Why he came out in charge of some machinery or something! None of them have any right to call themselves engineers. I call them all surveyors—working men—that sort of thing! and to think that a woman who really is a lady!"

"Oh come, Maria, come!" cried her husband, "you are glad enough of the P.W.D. when you have no bigger fish on hand."

"I don't understand what you mean by bigger fish, Colonel Mitchell," said the lady indignantly; but if she did not know, all the rest of the audience did. Match-making mothers are very common in fiction, but more rare in actual life, and when one exists she is speedily seen through, and her wiles are generally the amusement of her circle, though the woman remains unconscious of this. And indeed poor Mrs. Mitchell was not so bad as she was supposed to be. She was a great entertainer, getting up parties of all kinds, which was the natural impulse of a fussy but not unkindly personality, delighting to be in the midst of everything; and it is certain that picnics and even dinner parties, much less dances, cannot be managed unless you keep up your supply of young men. There were times when her eagerness to keep up that supply and to assure its regularity was put down quite wrongly to the score of her daughters, which is an injustice which every hospitable woman with daughters must submit to. A sort of half-audible titter went round the little party when Colonel Mitchell, with that cruel satisfaction so often seen in men, gave over his wife to the criticism of society. A man never stands by the women of his family in such circumstances; he deserts them even when he does not, as in this instance, actually betray. There was one young man, however, one of the staff of dancers and picnic men, who was faithful to her—a poor young fellow who knew that he had no chance of being looked upon as a *parti*, and who made a diversion in pure gratitude, a quality greatly lacking among his kind.

"Rowland," he said, "is one of the best fellows in the world. He does not shine perhaps among ladies, but he's good fun when he likes, and a capital companion."

"And Miss Ferrars, dear," said one of the ladies soothingly, "is not like my Ethel or your Dorothy. Poor thing, it is just as well, for she has nobody to look after her: she is, to say the least, old enough to manage matters for herself."

"And to know that such a chance would never come again,"

said one of the men with a laugh—which is a kind of speech that jars upon women, though they may perhaps say something very like it themselves. But to think of Miss Ferrars making a last clutch of desperation at James Rowland the engineer, as at a chance which might never occur again, was too much even for an afternoon company making a social meal upon a victim, and there was a feeling of compunction and something like guilt when some one whispered almost with awe, “Look! there they are.”

The party in question were seated in a verandah in the cool of the day when the sun was out of sight. They had all been gasping in semi-darkness through the heat, and now had come to life again to enjoy a little gossip, before entering upon the real business of dining and the amusements of the evening. The ladies sat up in their chairs, and the men put themselves at least in a moral attitude of attention as the two figures went slowly across the square. One feels a little “caught” in spite of oneself by the sudden appearance of a person who has been under discussion at the moment he or she appears. There is a guilty sense that walls have ears, and that a bird of the air may carry the matter. It was a relief to everybody when the pair had passed and were seen no more. They went slowly, for the lady had a couple of little children clinging to her hands.

Miss Ferrars was of an appearance not to be passed over, even though she was quite old enough, as her critic said, to manage matters for herself—so old as to have no prospect of another chance did she reject the one unexpectedly offered to her at present. She was a woman a little more than the ordinary height, and a little less than the ordinary breadth—a slim, tall woman, with a very pliant figure, which when she was young had lent itself to all kinds of poetical similes. But she was no longer young. She must have been forty at the least, and she was not without the disadvantages that belong to that age. She did not look younger than she was. Her complexion had faded, and her hair had been touched, not to that premature whiteness which softens and beautifies, but to an iron gray, which is apt to give a certain sternness to the face. That there was no sternness about her, it was only necessary to see her attitude with the children, who clung to her and swayed her about, now to one side now to the other, with the restless tyranny peculiar to their age, while still she endeavoured to give her attention and a smile to the middle-aged person by her side, who, truth to tell, was by no means so patient of the children’s presence as she was. It was the little boy, who was next to Mr. Rowland, and who kicked his legs and got in the way of his footsteps, that brought that colour of anger to his face, and many exclamations which had to be repressed to his lips. Those dreadful little Stanhopes! Miss Ferrars had been by way of paying a visit to the friend of her childhood, and it was very kind, everybody said, of Mrs. Stanhope to stretch such

a point for a friend, and to keep her so long. But there were many who knew very well what Evelyn Ferrars had not said even to herself, that she was the most useful member of the Stanhope household, doing everything for the children, though not a word was said of any such duties as those which had insensibly been thrown upon her. Nobody breathed such a word as governess in respect to Mrs. Stanhope's friend : but people have eyes, and uncommonly sharp ones sometimes at an Indian station, and everybody knew perfectly to what that long visit had come.

Mr. Rowland was a man of another order altogether. He was not tall, and he was rather broad—a ruddy weather-beaten man, much shone upon by the sun, and blown about by all the winds. It was not difficult to see at a glance the difference between the two, which the critics in Colonel Mitchell's verandah had pointed out so fully. He was dressed as well as the gentlemen of the station, and had an air of prosperity and wealth which was not often to be seen in the lean countenances of the soldiers ; but he was not like them. He was respectable beyond words, well-off, a sensible, responsible man : but he was not what is called a gentleman in common parlance. You may say that he was much better, being a good and upright and honest man ; but after all that is but a begging of the question, for he might have been all these things and yet a gentleman, and this would have been in every way of the greatest advantage to him. It would have done him good with the young men under him, and even with the overseers and foremen of his works, as well as with the handful of people who made society in the station. Fortunately, however, he was not himself conscious of this deficiency, or if he was, accepted it as a matter of fact that did no real harm. He did not, as Mrs. Mitchell said, even pretend to be a gentleman. As he walked along by the side of the lady who had accepted him as her future husband, a great satisfaction betrayed itself in every look and movement. His face was lighted up with a sort of illumination as he turned it towards her—not the transport of a young man, or the radiance of that love-look which makes the most homely countenance almost beautiful, for he was perhaps beyond the age for such exaltation of sentiment ; but a profound satisfaction and content which seemed to breathe out from him, surrounding him with an atmosphere of his own. Perhaps there was not the same expression upon the face of his betrothed. It is true that she was disturbed by the children, who hung upon her, dragging her now in one direction now in another ; but at least her face was quietly serene, untroubled—peaceful if not glad.

This was the story of their wooing. Mr. Rowland, though he was not looked upon by the Society of the station as quite their equal, was yet invited everywhere, dining with everybody : and was treated with the utmost hospitality, so that no one could

have suspected that any suspicion as to his worthiness was in the minds of these friendly people whom such a sudden event as this threatened marriage had moved to discussion of the claim to be one of them, which indeed he had never made, but which they had all awarded in that ease of social arrangement which herds together a little masterful alien community in the midst of that vast continent peopled by races so different. To be an Englishman is of itself in India a social grade, and thus Mr. Rowland the engineer had many opportunities of seeing Mrs. Stanhope's friend, both in Mrs. Stanhope's house and the houses of the other magnates of the station. He had met her at all the entertainments given, and they were many, and he had almost immediately singled her out, not because of her beauty nor of the dependent position which touches the heart of some men, nor indeed for any reason in particular, except that he did single her out. Such an attraction is its own sole reason and explanation. It was not even choice, but simple destiny, which made him feel that here, by God's grace, was the one woman for him. I do not deny that when this middle-aged and perfectly honest and straightforward man asked her to marry him, Evelyn Ferrars was taken very much by surprise. She opened wide a pair of brown eyes which had not been without note in their day, but which had long ceased to expect any homage, and looked at him as if for the moment she thought him out of his senses. Did he know what he was saying—did he by any strange chance mean it? She looked at him with scarcely a blush, so great was her surprise, making these inquiries with her startled eyes; and there can be no doubt that her first impulse was to say no. But before she said it a sudden train of thought darted out from her mind, one crowding after the other an endless succession of ideas and reflections, presented to her in the twinkling of an eye, as if they had been a line of soldiers on the march. And she paused. He was scarcely aware of the hesitation, and resumed again after that moment of silence, pleading his own cause, very modestly yet very earnestly, with a seriousness and soberness which were much more effectual than greater enthusiasm would have been. But by this time she was scarcely aware what he said; it was her own mind that had come into action, saying to her a hundred things more potent than what he was saying, and changing in a moment all the tenor of her thoughts. Evelyn was not perhaps much more of a free agent than Rowland was in this moment of fate. She felt afterwards that she had been stopped and her attention attracted as by the flash of one of those sun-signals of which she had been hearing. She was altogether in a military atmosphere in the Stanhopes' house, and everybody had been explaining that process by which the sun's rays are made to communicate messages from one distant army to another. She was stopped with the no on her lips by the flash and radiation through the air of that message. She had not any code of

interpretation to note in a moment what it meant. But she paused, almost to her own astonishment ; and when she found her voice, it was to ask for a little time to think before she gave her final reply.

When a woman does this, it is almost invariably the case that she decides for the suitor, even the doubt being, I suppose, a point in his favour, and increasing a disposition—a bias towards him rather than away from him. Evelyn had, like most other Englishwomen, a lively and wholesome feeling that love alone justified marriage, and that any less motive was a desecration of that tremendous tie. It is an excellent thing for a race that this superstition should exist, and I am far from desiring to see any lower ground accepted as the basis of a connection upon which the purity and character of all other affections depend. But yet when reason is allowed time to speak, there are many other things which may be permitted to have a voice, and a woman may at least be allowed to take into consideration at forty, arguments which at twenty would be indignantly refused a hearing. What Evelyn Ferrars felt as she retired from that interview which had opened to her so many and such extraordinary new suggestions for thought, it is difficult to describe. She had become all at once a sort of battlefield—to keep up the military simile—in which that “No,” which had been her first conception of the situation, stood like a force entrenched and on the defensive, somewhat sullen, holding fast upon the mere fact of its existence, emitting a dull roar of artillery now and then, while the attacking forces scoured the plain in endless evolution, pressing on and on. The first flash of the sun-signal, which she had not been at first able to interpret, turned out to mean a rapid identification of her own position, which was a thing she had not allowed herself to think of, while it was without remedy. It was not what she had anticipated when she ventured in her loneliness to come up country in answer to her friend’s warm invitation. She had come out to Calcutta with her brother, the last survivor of her family after the breaking up of home at her father’s death ; and when he too died soon after, cut off by the sudden stroke which ends so many promising careers in India, the despair of the solitary woman left in a strange place with few friends and little money, and nobody to come to her help, had been almost without a gleam of light. And in that emergency the Stanhopes had been very kind. The wife had written imploring her heart-broken friend to come to her, offering her all that the affection of a sister could do to supply her loss ; the husband had come, what was even more kind, to do what he could for her, and to take her, if she consented, home. They had been more than kind. There had been no alloy of interested motives in that first impulse of generous compassion. It was good to think how frank, how full, how affectionate it had been.

But—oh what a pity, what a pity, that these beautiful

impulses and sincere moments of loving kindness should ever be shadowed by the cold shade of afterthoughts! From the moment when Mrs. Stanhope weeping received poor Evelyn into her arms, and lavished upon her the caresses and endearments of the most devoted friendship, to that in which Miss Ferrars became the unpaid governess, the useful dependent, and at the same time a member of the family who was apt to be *de trop*, who was not wanted between husband and wife, who was always there and could not be kept to her schoolroom and out of the way as an ordinary governess would have been—was unfortunately not very long. And indeed it was nobody's fault. The consciousness that she was getting a great deal out of her friend, and that the tables were more or less turned, and it was Evelyn who was conferring the benefit, did not make it easier to Mrs. Stanhope to keep up the effusion and tenderness of the first welcome: and Captain Stanhope was often cross, troubled by harassments of his own, and wishing his wife's friend anywhere but where she was, notwithstanding the fact that her presence was “everything for the children.” The situation had grown more and more strained, but there seemed no issue out of it: for it takes a great deal of money to take your passage from the centre of India to England, even when you know where to go and have your living assured when there. And Evelyn had nothing, neither a house to go to nor enough money for the journey. There were moments when she would have given anything in the world—which is a mere figure of speech, for she had nothing in the world to give—to be able to go away, and relieve her friends of her inconvenient presence; and there were moments when she felt that she was of too much use in the house to deprive them of her services, as if she grudged the expenditure. It was scarcely possible to imagine a position more painful and trying. It was nothing to her that her whole life was absorbed in the service of her friends and their children. Many women are able to make this kind of sacrifice and to stave off all thoughts of the future and what is to become of them after—with a heroic obedience to the Gospel precept of taking no thought for the morrow. But that was not all. For she was at the same time, as she felt, an inconvenience to the very people for whom she was spending her strength: they wanted her very room for other uses. They did not want her constantly between them spoiling their *tête-à-tête*—always to be considered when there was company, and to be invited with them when they went out. The very children got to know that Aunt Evelyn, as they called her, was *de trop* in the house, and yet could neither go nor be sent away.

And here suddenly was the opening of a door which made all things possible. When that mental heliograph flashed in her face, and she became aware of what it meant, Evelyn, for almost the first time, retired into her room and locked her door, and for a whole hour turned a deaf ear to the demands made upon

her. The children came and called in every tone of impatience, Edith, the eldest, tap-tapping upon the closed door for ten minutes continuously, and little Bobby kicking, to the great derangement of the thoughts going on within ; but for the first and only time Evelyn held fast. She had plenty to do in that house, more than ever she had done before in her life. In the previous crises of that existence it had been other people who had done the thinking, and there had been little left for her but to submit. Now, however, the matter was in her hands, and no one else could help her. It was hard work getting her head clear enough to put this and that together ; for the mere idea of marriage was very startling and indeed terrifying to the middle-aged woman who had put it out of all her calculations years ago, and who had retained merely the old youthful superstition that its only warrant was love. But was that really so ? After all it was not so simple a thing that it could be thus dismissed and classified. It was a very complicated thing and involved many duties. It was not merely an emotional matter, but one full of practical necessities and exertions. To be a true and helpful companion through all the chances of life : to govern a household : to secure comfort and peace of mind and consolation in all circumstances and occurrences for the partner of life : to care for him and his interests as nobody else could do : to adopt his obligations and help him to serve God and to serve men—Evelyn Ferrars felt that she was capable of all that. It was a worthy office to fulfil, and it was surely the chief part. As for the other side it was undeniable that she shrank from it a little. But he was not young any more than herself. The hour was scarcely over when Mrs. Stanhope herself appeared at the door, half with the air of a mistress who has a right to all her retainer's time, and half with that of a friend anxious to know what was the matter.

"The children tell me they cannot make you hear," she said. "I came myself to see if you were ill, or if anything is wrong."

"You have come just when I wanted you," said Evelyn, "if I may shut the door on the children for ten minutes more. Helen, something very wonderful has happened, and I have been trying to think what I must do."

"What has happened ?" said Mrs. Stanhope in alarm.

"Mr. Rowland has asked me to—to marry him," said Evelyn. She did not blush as women do, even when their feelings are but little stirred. She was too anxious to learn what her friend's verdict would be.

Mrs. Stanhope uttered a cry, and rising up hastily, caught Evelyn in her arms. "Oh," she said, "I shall lose you, Eve !" The words and the embrace were full of compunction, of kindness, and remorse ; but Evelyn felt the relief, the thankfulness, that suddenly flooded her friend's breast, and her decision was no longer in any doubt.

## CHAPTER II

"MR. ROWLAND," said Evelyn with a little tremor, "the first thing I would like to say to you is that we are neither of us very young."

"Miss Ferrars," said the engineer, "you are just as young as it is best and most beautiful to be."

There came a light like the reflection of a sudden flame over a face which she at least thought to be a faded face. She had never at her youngest and fairest received such a compliment, and how it could have come from a plain man who had so little appearance of any poetry about him was bewildering. It was indeed difficult to resume the middle-aged matter-of-fact tone after such an unexpected break.

"I am forty-two," she said, "and I have not been without experiences in my life. I want you to know what my past has been, before—"

"Whatever you please to tell me," he said with an air of deep respect—"but I must say it is not necessary. I am quite satisfied; your experiences may have been painful—the world isn't over good to people like you. If you will give me your companionship for the rest of our lives, that is enough for me, and far more than I can ever deserve. I have had my experiences too—"

"I must tell you, however, my story," she said. "Women, especially those who have lived in the virginal age for so long, are very conscientious in these matters. They have a much greater respect for love than ordinary people, and think it dishonourable to keep back the knowledge from a future husband of how they have been affected in this way during their past. The love that may have touched them years before they had even heard his name, seems to their over delicacy as if it must be a drawback to them in his eyes—a really guilty secret of which a clean breast must be made before the new and real history is allowed to begin."

"I was," she said with a little hesitation, "engaged to be married at the usual age. It is a long time ago. My father had not met with any misfortunes then. We were living at home. That makes so great a difference in every way. We were of course well known people, friendly with everybody; everything about us was well known. You know in a county people are acquainted with everything about each other—you can't conceal it when anything happens to you, even if you wished to conceal it."

"I never had anything to do with a county," he said, with a sort of respectful acquiescence, interested but not curious—"but I can understand what you mean."

"Well: when my father speculated and was so unfortunate

(it was really more for my sake than for any other reason that he speculated—and then he was drawn on) it became impossible to carry my engagement out. The gentleman I was engaged to, was not very well off then. We had to think what was best for both of us. We agreed that it would be best to break it off. I should only have been a sort of mill-stone round his neck. People might have expected him to help papa. And his own means were quite limited then. He had not been supposed a good match for me in my wealthy days—and when the tables were turned in this way, we both thought it was better to part."

"And did the fellow let you go—did he give you up? The wretched cad!" cried James Rowland, adding this violent expression of opinion under his breath.

"You must not speak so, Mr. Rowland; it was a mutual agreement. We both, I need hardly say, felt it very much. I—for a long time. Indeed, it has had an influence upon all my life. Don't think I have regretted it," she said eagerly, "for if we had not done it by mutual agreement as we did, with a sense of the necessity—we should have been forced to do it. For as it turned out, I could not have left my father. He was very much shattered. It cost him a great deal to give up his home. He had been born there, and all his people before him."

"And you, I suppose, were born there too, and all your people before you?"

"I? Oh! that was nothing! Wherever one is with one's own belongings, there is home. It doesn't matter for anything else. But it was more sad than words can say for poor papa. He had to move into the village to a little house. He bore it like a hero, thinking that it was best not to hide himself as if he had done any wrong. Misfortune and loss are not wrong. I want you," she said, gently, having raised her head for that one profession of faith, but dropping into the usual quiet tone again, "to know exactly all about us before—"

"And did you ever see that—man again?"

The adjectives that were implied in the pause James Rowland made before he brought out the word "man" were lost upon Evelyn, who probably could not have imagined anything so forcible, not to say profane.

"Yes," she said quietly, "often. We could not help it; to go anywhere he had to go through our village. He removed very soon, which was the kindest thing he could have done."

"The vile cad!" said James Rowland between his teeth.

"What did you say?" she asked with a startled look: but the engineer did not repeat those words.

"I am sure I for one am very much obliged to him," he said, getting up and walking about the room. "I'm not the man to object. He did the best thing he could have done for me. And you nursed your poor father till he died; and then you came from one trouble to another."

"Oh, do not speak of that! My poor Harry—my darling brother! to lose his home and his inheritance, and to be banished away from all he loved; and then just when life was beginning to smile a little, to die! I cannot speak of that!"

Mr. Rowland walked about the room more quickly than ever. She had covered her face with her hands, and the hot heavy tears were falling upon her dress like rain. After many hesitations he came up to her, and put his hand on her shoulder. "Is that so bad," he said, "if we really believe that the other life is the better life? We say so, don't we? and no doubt he's got something better to do there than railroads, and likes it better, now he's there."

She looked up at him startled, though the sentiment was common enough. It is a fine thing to be matter-of-fact on such a subject, and gives faith a solid reality which is denied to a more poetical view.

"I'm not sorry for him," said Rowland. "I'll hope to know him some day. I've always heard he was a fine fellow, incapable of anything that was—shoddy." Our engineer used very good English often, but now and then he knew nothing so forcible as the jargon which has got so much into all talk nowadays, and is a pitfall for a partially educated man. "But," he said, pressing his hand upon her shoulder, in a way which perhaps a finer gentleman would not have used to call her attention, "There is this to be said, my dear lady. You've had a great deal of trouble, but if I live you shall have no more. No more if I can help it! As long as James Rowland is to the fore nothing shall get at you, my dear, but over his body."

He said it with fervour and with a momentary gleam as of moisture in his eyes; and she, looking up to him with a certain surprise in hers in which the tears were not dry, held out her hand. And thus their bargain was made: with as true emotion, perhaps, as if they had been lovers of twenty rushing into each other's arms. No trouble to get at her but over his body! it was a curious touch of romance and hyperbole in the midst of the matter-of-fact. And how true it turned out! and how untrue!—as if any one living creature could ever come between another and that fate to which we are born as the sparks fly upwards. But the idea of being thus taken care of, and of some one interposing his body between her and every assailant, was so new to Evelyn that she could not but smile. She was the one that had taken care of everybody and interposed her delicate body between them and fate.

"And now," said he, "it's my turn. I was ready when you began. I've more to say, and less; for nobody has ever done me wrong. I am a widower to start with. I don't know if you had heard that—"

"Yes—I heard it—"

"That's all right then; you did not get to know me under false pretences. But you must know that I wasn't always what

I am now. I am not very much to brag of, you will say now—but I'm a gentleman to what I was," he said, with a little harsh emotional laugh.

"Don't please talk in that way, you offend me," she said; "you must always have been a gentleman, Mr. Rowland, in your heart."

"Do you think you could say Rowland plain out? No? Well, after all it would not be suitable for a lady like you—it's more for men."

"I will say 'James,' if you prefer it," she said, with a moment's hesitation.

"Would you? Yes, of course I prefer it—above all things: but don't worry yourself. Well, I was saying—Yes, I've been a married man. She lived for five years. She was as good a little thing as ever lived, an engineer's daughter, just my own class. We worked at the same foundry, he and I. Nothing could be more suitable. Poor Mary! it's so long since: I sometimes ask myself was there ever a Mary? did I ever live like that, getting up in the dark winter mornings, coming home to the clean kitchen and the tidy place, bringing her my week's wages. It's like a story you read in a book, not like me. But I went through it all. She was the best little wife in the world, keeping everything so nice; and when she had her first baby, what an excitement it was!" The honest middle-aged engineer fixed his eyes on space and went on with his story, smiling a little to himself, emphasizing it a little by the pressure of Evelyn's hand which he held in his own. Curiously enough, as it seemed to her looking on, not much understanding a man's feelings, wondering at them—he was more or less amused by his recollections. She felt her heart soft for the young wife whose life must have been so short: but he smiled at the far-off, touching, pleasing recollection. "She was a pretty creature," he said, "nice blue eyes, pretty light hair with a curl in it over her forehead." He gave Evelyn's hand another pressure, and looked at her suddenly with a smile. "Not like you," he said.

She had a feeling half of shocked amazement at his lightness: and yet it was so natural. Such a long time ago: a picture in the distance: a story he had read: the little fair curls on her forehead and the clean fireside and the first baby. He was by no means sure that it had all happened to himself, that he was the man coming in with his fustian suit all grimy, and his week's wages to give to his wife. It was impossible not to smile at that strange condition of affairs with a sort of affectionate spectatorship. Mr. Rowland seemed to remember the young fellow too, who had a curly shock of hair as well, and, when he had washed himself, was a well-looking lad. With what a will he had hewed down the loaf, and eaten the bacon and consumed his tea—very comfortable, more comfortable perhaps than the well-known engineer ever was at a great dinner. He had his books in a corner, and after Mary had cleared the table, got

them out and worked at diagrams and calculations all the evening to the great admiration of his wife. He half wondered, as he told the story, what had become of that promising young man.

"Not like you," he said again, "but much more suitable. If I had met you in those days, I should have been afraid to speak to you. I would have admired you all the same, my dear, for I always had an eye for a lady, with every respect be it said. But she, you know, poor thing, was just my own kind. Well, well! there's always a doubt in it how much a man is the happier for changing out of his natural born place. But I don't think I should like to go back: and now that you don't seem to mind consorting with one who was only a working man——"

Evelyn was a little confused what to say. She was very much interested in his picture of his past life, but a little disturbed that he too should seem no more than interested, telling it so calmly as if it were the story of another: and she had not the faculty of making pretty speeches or saying that a working man was her ideal and the noblest work of God. So she, on her side, pressed his hand a little to call him out of his dream. "You said—the first baby?"

"Oh yes, I should have said that at once. There are two of them, poor little things. Oh, they have been very well looked after. I left them with her sister, a good sort of woman, who treats them exactly like her own—which has been a great thing both for them and for me. I was very heart-broken, I assure you, when she died, poor thing. I had always been a dreadful fellow for my books, and the firm saw I suppose that I was worth my salt, and made a proposal to me to come out here. There was no Cooper's Hill College or that sort of thing then. We came out, and we pushed our way as we could. It comes gradually that sort of thing—and I got accustomed to what you call society by degrees, just as I came to the responsibility of these railroads. I could not have ventured to take that upon me once, any more than to have dined at mess. I do both now and never mind. The railroad is an affair of calculation and of keeping your wits about you. So is the other. You just do as other men do, and all goes well."

"But," she said, pressing the question, "I want you to tell me about the children."

"To be sure! there are two of them, a boy and a girl. I have got their photographs somewhere, the boy is the eldest. I'll look them up and show them to you: poor little things! Poor Mary was very proud of them. But you must make allowance for me. I have been a very busy man, and beyond knowing that they were well, and providing for them liberally, I have not paid as much attention as perhaps I ought to have done. You see, I was full of distress about her when I left England; and out here a man is out of the way of thinking of that sort of thing, and forgets: well no, I don't mean forgets—".

"I am sure you do not," she said, "but are you not afraid they may have been brought up differently from what you would wish?"

"Oh dear, no," he said cheerfully, "they have been brought up by her sister, poor thing, a very good sort of woman. I am sure their mother herself could not have done better for them than Jean."

"But," said Miss Ferrars, "you are yourself so different, as you were saying, from what you were when you came to India first?"

"Different," he said with a laugh. "I should think so, indeed—oh, very different! things I never should have dreamt of aspiring to then, seem quite natural to me now. You may say different. When I look at you—"

She did not wish him to look at her, at least from this point of view, and it was very difficult to secure his attention to any other subject; which, perhaps, was natural enough. The only thing she could do without too much pertinacity was to ask, which was an innocent question, how long it was since he had come to India first.

"A long time," he said, "a long time. I was only a little over thirty. It was in the year —, seventeen years ago. I am near fifty now."

"Then your son?" she said, with a little hesitation.

"The little fellow? Well, and what of him?"

"He must be nearly twenty now."

He looked at her with an astonished stare for a moment. "Twenty!" he said, as if the idea was beyond his comprehension. Then he repeated with a puzzled countenance, "Twenty! you don't say so! Now that you put it in that light, I suppose he is."

"And your daughter—"

"My little girl—" he rubbed his head in a bewildered way. "You are very particular in your questions. Are you afraid of them? You may be sure I will never let them be a subject of annoyance to you."

"Indeed, you mistake me altogether," said Evelyn. "It will be anything but annoyance. It will be one of the pleasures of my life." She was very sincere by nature, and she did pause a moment before she said pleasures. She was not so sure of that. They had suddenly become her duty, her future occupation, but as to pleasures she was far from certain. Children brought up without any knowledge of their father, in the sphere which he had left so long ago, and which he was so conscious was different, very different from all he was familiar with now. It was curious to hear him enlarge upon the difference, and yet take so little thought of it in this most important particular. Her seriousness moved him at last.

"I see," he said regretfully, "that you think I have been very indifferent to them, very negligent. But what could a man do?"

I could not have them here, to leave them in the charge of servants. I could not drag them about with me from one province to another. What could I have done? And I knew they were happy at home."

"You must not think I am blaming you. I see all the difficulty: but now—now you will have them with you, will you not, and take them back into your life?"

He looked at her with eyes full of admiration and content. "Is that the first thing you want me to do," he said, "the first thing you have at heart?"

"Yes," she said simply, "and the most natural thing. Your children. What could they be but my first interest? They are old enough—that is one good thing—to come to India without pause."

He rose from her side again and returned to his habitual action of walking about the room. "I knew," he said, "from the first moment, that I was a lucky man, indeed, to meet with you. I have always been a lucky man; but never so much as when you made up your mind to have me, little as I deserve a woman like you. I've that good in me that I know it when I see it: a good woman from the crown of your head to the sole of your foot. There's nothing in the world so good as that. Now, I'll tell you something, and I hope it will please you, for it's chiefly meant to please you. I am very well off. I can settle something very comfortable on you, and I can provide for the young ones. If it pleases you, my dear, we'll turn our backs on this blazing India altogether, and go home."

"Go home!" she said, with startled eyes.

"You'd like it? A country place in England or Scotland—better still, a house that would be your own—that you could settle in your own way, with all the things that please ladies nowadays. I'll bring you home a cartload of curiosities that will set you up in that way. And then you could have the children, and put them through their facings. Eh, my lady dear? You'd like that? Well, I can afford it," he said with subdued exultation, with his hands in those pockets which metaphorically contained all that heart of man could desire. His eyes glowed with pleasure, with triumph, with a consciousness that he was making her happy. Yes! this was what every English lady banished in India must desire. A house in her own country, with every kind of greenness round, and every comfort within—with beautiful Indian stuffs and carpets, and curious things—and the children to pet and guide as she pleased. He was again the spectator, so to speak, of a picture of life, which rose before him, more beautiful than that of old—himself, indeed, the least lovely part of it, yet not so much amiss for an old fellow who had made all the money, and who could give her everything that could please her, everything her heart could wish for. His eyes, though they were not in themselves remarkable, grew liquid and lustrous in the pleasure of that thought.

As for Evelyn, she sat startled, holding her hands clasped in her lap, with many things beyond the satisfaction he imagined in her eyes. Home in England meant something to her which could never be again. She said somewhat faintly—"In Scotland, if you would please me most of all." At which words, for Rowland was a Scotsman, he came to her in a glow of pleasure and took both her hands, and ventured, for the first time, to touch her forehead with his lips. The touch gave this elderly pair a little shock, a surprise, which startled her still more.

### CHAPTER III

THOSE two people had both a good deal to think about when they parted.

As for Evelyn the agitation of telling her own story, and the extraordinary commotion which had been produced in her mind by the suggestion of going home, affected her like an illness. As she escaped from the inroad of the Stanhope children, all much surprised and indignant at being kept out, a thing which had never happened in their experience before, and made her way almost like a fugitive to the seclusion of her own room, she felt all the languor and exhaustion of a patient who had gone through a severe bodily crisis. It was over and she felt no pain —on the contrary, that sensation of relief which is one of the most beatific in nature, had stolen through her relaxed limbs and faintly throbbing head. The ordeal was over, and it had been less terrible than she had feared. The man whom she had consented to marry, and with whose life her own would henceforward be identified, had not disappointed her, as it was possible he might have done. He was not a perfect man. He had been careless, very careless of those children who ought (she thought) to have been his first care. But otherwise he was true. There was no fictitious show about him, no pretension. He had been, she felt sure, as good a husband to that poor young creature who was dead as any man could be. Poor Mary! her story was so simple, so pretty and full of tenderness as he told it. Evelyn had liked him better for every word. Had she lived!—ah, had she lived! That would have been a different matter altogether. In that case James Rowland would probably have become foreman at the foundry, and remained a highly respectable working man all his life, bringing up his children in the natural way to follow his own footsteps. Would it have been perhaps better so? It would have been more natural, far more free of complications, without any of the difficulties which she could not help foreseeing. These difficulties would be neither few nor small. Two children brought up by their Aunt Jane, in an atmosphere strongly shadowed by the foundry, to be suddenly transplanted

to a large country house full of luxury and leisure, and the habits of an altogether different life—and not children either but grown up, eighteen and twenty! She drew a long breath, and put her hands together with an involuntary drawing together of her forces. Here was a thing to look forward to! But as for Rowland himself he had come through that ordeal, which was in one sense a trial of his real mettle, carried on before the most clear-sighted tribunal, before a judge whose look went through and through him, though not a word was said to put him on his guard, most satisfactorily, a sound man and true, with his heart in the right place and no falseness about him. It was true that in one respect he was very wrong. He had neglected the children: on this subject there could be no doubt. He had no right to forget that they were growing up, that their homely aunt, who was as good to them as if they were her own, was not all they wanted, though it might have been sufficient when they were little children. Miss Ferrars did not excuse him for this, but she forgave him, which was perhaps better.

She regarded the prospect thus opening before her with a half-amused sensation of dismay and horror. Oh, it would be no amusing matter! Her mind took a rapid survey of the situation, and a shiver ran over her. It would be she, probably, who would have to bear the brunt. He perhaps would not remark, as a woman would, though he was their father. "A kick that scarce would move a horse may kill a sound divine." Their defects would probably not be apparent to him, and he would have the strong claim of paternal love to carry him through everything. On the whole, perhaps, it was better that there should be something to do of this strenuous description. It would keep the too-much well-being in hand. Two people very well off, able to give themselves everything they wanted, contented (more or less) with each other, were apt to fall into a state of existence which was not elevated, especially when they were middle-aged and the glamour of youth and happy love, and all the sentiment of that period did not exist for them. Evelyn looked upon married life with something of the criticism of a woman long unmarried. It was often a selfish life. Selfishness never comes to such a climax as when it is practised by two, in each other's interests, and does not seem to be selfishness at all. When the horizon is limited by the wants and wishes of *us*, it is more subtly and exquisitely bound in, than when the centre is *me*. In such circumstances people are incapable of being ashamed of themselves, while a selfish solitary sometimes is. But the children! that restored the balance. There would be enough to keep a woman in her sober senses, to neutralize the deadening effects of prosperity, in that. As she laid herself down upon her bamboo couch to rest a little, she laughed to herself at the picture of too great quiet, too perfect external well-being that had been in her mind. There would be a few

thorns in the pillow—it would not be all repose and tranquillity. She might make her mind easy about that.

The other thing that moved her was the suggestion of going home. Home meant to Evelyn the county in which she had spent her life, the house in which she had been born. Nothing more likely than that the very dwelling was in the market—that he might buy it—that she the last Ferrars might recover possession of the house of her fathers. She had heard something to this effect with that acuteness to catch a half-said inference in respect to anything that is of personal interest which is so remarkable. Had it concerned any property on earth but Langley Ferrars, she would never have caught the words: but because it was about her old home she had heard what two men were saying in the crowd of a station ball—"A property in Huntingdonshire," "dirt cheap," "last man couldn't keep it up." She had divined from this that her home was to be bought, that it could yet be recovered. Oh no, no, she cried to herself, covering her face with her hands, not for anything in the world! To go back there where she had been a happy girl, where all her dreams of love and happiness had taken place, where the famous oaks and bucks of Selston, which was *his* home, were visible from the windows! Oh no, no—oh no, no: that indeed was more than she could bear. In Scotland it would be another matter. It was no doubt the very thing which a kind man without very fine perceptions would do, to buy back her home for her, to take her there in triumph. A thrill of almost physical terror came over her. "Oh no," she said to herself, "oh no, no, no!" These were the two things that disturbed the dreamy calm of that sensation of trial over, the kind of moral convalescence in which she found herself. They came through the misty quiet with flashes of alarm. But, on the whole, Evelyn felt as if she had been ill and was getting better, slowly coming round to a world which was changed indeed, and had lost something, but also had gained something, a world with no vague outlines in it or uncertainty, but clearly defined, spread out like a map before her. Perhaps there was something to regret in the old solitude to which her subdued life could retire out of all its troublesome conditions, and be its own mistress. But solitude, though it may be soothing, is not cheerful: and if she relinquished that, there was surely something in the constant companionship of one who had the highest regard for her, thought the very best of her, looked upon all her ways and words with admiration which should make up. He was a good honest man. He rang as true as a silver bell. There was nothing in him to be ashamed of. He was kind and genuine, with right thoughts and no false shame, but for that unaccountable failure about the children—a man as good as any she had met with in all her life. And to say there was no romance about the business, was to say the most foolish untruthful thing. Why it was all romance, far more than

the girl and boy love-story, where they ran away with each other in defiance of every consideration ! Here was a sober man, long accustomed to his own way, and to moving lightly unimpeded about the earth, a prosaic man, thinking a good deal of the world, who had suddenly turned aside out of his way, to take note of a neglected woman in a corner, and to raise her up over the heads of all the people who had pitied her. She would have been more than woman had she not felt that. To be able to do favours where she had received them, to give help with a liberal hand where she had been compelled to accept it in little, and perhaps with a grudge. Was it not romance that she who had nothing, should all at once, in the twinkling of an eye, have much and be rich, when she had been poor ? It was in reality as great a romance as if he had been King Cophetua and she the beggar-maid—almost more so, for Evelyn Ferrars was not beautiful as the day. She was to her own consciousness faded and old. This was stating the case much too strongly, but it was how a woman, such as she was, judges herself. If James Rowland was not a romantic lover, who was ? He was more romantic than any Prince Charming that ever could be.

Mr. Rowland himself went away from this interview with feelings which were almost in a greater commotion than those of Evelyn. He was excited by going back upon the old life which had died out of his practical mind so completely, and which was to him as a tale that is told—yet which lay there, all the same, an innocent sweet memory deprived of all pain, a story of a young man and a young woman, both of whom had disappeared under the waves and billows of life—the young man, a well-looking fellow in his way, just as much as the young woman who had died. Mr. Rowland, the great engineer, was not even much like him, that hard-headed young fellow with his books, working out his diagrams on the clean kitchen table, and studying and toiling over his figures. How that fellow pegged away ! James Rowland at forty-eight never opened a book. His calculations for practical work came to him as easy as a. b. c. He read his paper and the magazines when he saw them, but as for scientific works, never opened one, and did not think much of theoretical problems. And then the little house that was not far from the foundry, and the little clean bright pretty wife always ready and looking out for her husband, and the baby crying, and the young man coming in in his grimy fustian—it was a pretty picture, a charming story such as brings the tears to the eyes. She died, poor thing—they always have a sad end these little tales of real life. This was how he could not help looking at that story which he had just told, though it was the story of his own life. Now that he thought of it he could have given a great many more details, although he had also forgotten many. It was a pretty story. There were a great many such stories in the world, and when the wife died and the little house fell to pieces, it was not at all unusual that

the poor young fellow went to the bad. It was a good thing he had not done so in this case.

And then there came back to him with a shock that strange discovery about the children. Good heavens! to think they were grown up, those little things! The little one was a baby when he had seen her last—his paternal feelings had not been very strongly roused. To put them with their mother's sister and persuade her to take the full charge of them had been evidently far the best thing to do. She was a good sort of woman who had no children of her own, and they were to her as if they had been her own, which was everything that could be desired. To make sure that they wanted for nothing, and that they should have kindness and affection *pardessus le marché* was everything. Even now he did not see what more he could have done. He could not have brought them to India, where for a long time he had no settled place, and where, as everybody knows, children cannot live. He had done on the whole the very best thing for them. But it was startling to think that they were children of eighteen and twenty. Their aunt had sent him their photographs on various occasions, and he had replied in a way which did not displease her by adding on twenty pounds to his next cheque, and beseeching her to have them better dressed. Queer little things they had looked, not like the children at the station. He had taken it for granted that Jean had not much taste for dress, but that when she grew up, the little one would change that. They got to know by instinct what was becoming as they grew up, those little things: so he was easy in his mind on that subject. Perhaps he had not thought of going home till it came suddenly into his mind, to please Miss Ferrars. Of course that was what would please her most, to have a home in England. She looked like a home in England. She was not a station lady, full of picnics and dances. A large peaceful country house with fine trees and a beautiful garden, and a green fragrant park in which she could walk with him, that was what looked most like her: and she should have it! If Mr. Rowland had heard of Langley Ferrars which was in the market, I know very well what he would have done. He would have telegraphed to his man of business in London, regardless of expense, directing him to lose not a moment in securing that place. It would have been the most natural thing in the world for him to do. When a man is rich, a man of James Rowland's mind, giving presents is his easiest way of showing his kindly feelings—and it is not a bad way. And all the explanations in the world would never have got it into his kind head that she would not have liked such a present as that. Her own home restored to her, where she could live at ease, not poorly as her ruined father, poor gentleman, had been compelled to do—but lavishly if she liked, carrying things with a high hand, showing all the neighbours, who perhaps had looked down upon her in her poverty, how well she had done for herself.

There was nothing which would have pleased James Rowland more than this. But fortunately he never had heard that Langley Ferrars was in the market. He was not even aware indeed at this early period where his future wife had lived, or what the name of her home had been.

But she had said Scotland, which would be the best of all : and then suddenly had appeared before his eyes a vision of a house which he had often looked at when he went down the Clyde upon a holiday, or when there was some work at Greenock which he was entrusted with, as sometimes happened. Who can tell what visions of this kind steal into the brains of the working men in their noisy excursions, or the foundry lads with their sweethearts ? Oftenest it is a cottage, perhaps a little cockney villa on the edge of a loch. "I'd like to tak' ye there," said with glowing eyes and all the ardour of youthful dreams : or, "Eh, man, if there was a bit housie like yon ahint ye, to gang back to when ye were past work,"—such speeches are common in the mouths of the excursionists, who live and die, and are contented enough, in the high "lands" and common stairs of the huge dull town. But James Rowland had been more ambitious. What he had remarked most had been a house, with a white colonnade round it, standing up on a green knoll at the end of a peninsula which overlooked the Clyde. There was one special spot from which he remembered to have watched for it, through the opening in the trees, not saying anything to any one, not even to Mary, but watching till it became visible—not a villa, nor a cottage, but a great house, with beautiful woods round it, and soft green lawns sloping downwards towards the noble river-sea, which just there flowed out into the opening of a loch. It suddenly came before him in a moment while he walked through the cantonments towards his own lodging in the arid *enceinte* of the station. Such a contrast ! He felt as if he were again standing on the deck of the river steamboat, watching for the white walls, the pillars of the colonnade, as they appeared through the trees. He knew exactly at what moment the trees would stand aside, ranged into groups and lines, and the house would come into sight. He thought that if he had been blind, he would yet have known exactly when that opening came.

That was the place for him ! His heart gave a leap, almost as it had done when Evelyn Ferrars had given him her hand. It was the next thing almost—the fulfilment of a dream older by far than his knowledge of Evelyn Ferrars. Rosmore ! To think that he should come to that ; that it should be possible for him, the lad who had watched it so often coming in sight, to call it his own ! But it was not yet sure by any means whether he would ever call it his own. He was rich enough to buy it, to improve it, to fit it up as it never had been fitted up before, but whether he would get it or not, remained still to be seen. The owner would have to be tempted with a fancy price, more money than it was worth or could bring : for the owner was a great

personage, a man who was not to be supposed ready to offer one of his places to a chance buyer. Rowland did not mind the fancy price, and he enjoyed the thought of the diplomacy that would be required, and all the advances and retirings. It would be a home fit for *her*. She would bring the best people round her wherever she was. It should be hers, that home of his dreams, settled on her—her dower house—when he was out of the way: but he did not wish to think of being out of the way. He preferred to think of happiness and dignity and rest in that stately yet modest place, not too grand, quite simple indeed, not like the castellated absurdities of the Glasgow merchants. Among houses, it was like *her* among women, the most unpretending, the most sincere, every way the best!

And, then, with a sudden prick of his heart, he remembered the children. Oh, the children! To think that they could be so old as *that*, and that it had remained for her to find it out! Twenty! It was not possible little Archie could be that age. What a little chubby fellow he was, with a face as round as an apple, and little rosy cheeks—so like Mary, her very image. It had always been pleasanter to think of him like that, than to identify the little scrubby boy in the photographs poor Jean kept sending; or the lean lad who, he now remembered, had appeared on the last one. He had torn it up, as certainly a libel on his son, not at all the kind of picture which he could have wished to set up on his chimney-piece, and point out complacently to visitors as “my boy.” He remembered this incident of the photograph perfectly now, and that he refused angrily to accept that as a portrait of Archie. “The photograph you sent me was a mistake, I suppose,” he had written to his sister-in-law; “it is quite impossible it could be my boy;” and he forgot what explanation she made. He was not, indeed, very attentive to her letters. He glanced at them to see that the children were well, but he had seldom patience to read all the four pages. Jean’s style and her handwriting, and the very look of her letters had been vexatious to him for many years past. They suggested having been written on a kitchen table with a pen that was greasy. The very outside of them coming in the bag along with his business letters and his invitations gave Rowland a little shock. He preferred that other people should not see him receive these queer missives, the very envelopes of which looked common, not like the others. Now it occurred to him, with a pang, that it was no mistake, that the unwashed-looking lad, with the vulgar, ill-cut clothes was probably his son after all. The idea was horrible to him, but he was glad for one thing that he had torn the photograph up, and could not be made to produce it to show Evelyn what manner of youth Archie was—if he was like that! And then the baby, whom he had always thought of as the baby, with all the tenderness that belonged to the name. Tenderness! but something else as well—indifference, forgetfulness—or he could never have been

so blind, and suffered them to grow up like that. It was a very tormenting and uncomfortable thought, and Rowland was anxious to shake it off. He said to himself that photographs never do justice to the subject ; that perhaps the boy might be a fine boy for all that : and finally contrived to elude the whole disagreeable subject by saying to himself how clever it was of her to have made that out about their age ! What a clever woman she was ; not learned, or that sort of thing, but knowing so much, and so perfect in her manner, and such a true native-born lady. This was her grand quality above all. She said just the right thing, at the right time, never compromising any one, hurting nobody's feelings. He was himself rather given to treading on people's toes, and making afterwards the astonishing discovery that they felt it, even though he had meant no harm. But she never did anything like that. She would know how to manage that business about the children, and he had a happy persuasion that everything would go right in her hands.

## CHAPTER IV

AFTER all this record of thinkings it will be a relief to do something : which is generally the very best way, if not to settle a problem, at least to distract the attention from it. Mr. Rowland could not now do anything to alter the fact, that he had allowed his children to grow up in a different sphere from that which he intended them to occupy, and that probably the first meeting with them would contain many disenchantments and disappointments. No amount of thinking could now alter this fact, and dwelling upon it was not a way of making himself happier or adding in any way to the advantages of the moment. Like most men who have a great deal to do, and who must keep their brains clear for inevitable work, he had the power of putting disagreeable things away and declining to look at them. "Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof," is always the maxim of philosophy, whether we take it in its highest meaning or in a lower sense ; and it appeared to Mr. Rowland that the best thing he could do was to carry out his marriage with all the speed that was practicable, and to wind up his affairs (already prepared for that end) so that his return home might be accomplished as soon, and with as much pleasure to everybody concerned, as possible. As he was a very direct man, used to acting in the most straightforward way, his first step was to call on Mrs. Stanhope, who stood in the place of Evelyn's relations, in order to settle with her the arrangements he wished to make.

"I should like, with Miss Ferrars' consent—which I have not asked till I should have talked over the matter with you—that

the marriage should take place as soon as possible. I can trust to her excellent sense to perceive that we can have no possible reason to wait."

"Oh, Mr. Rowland!" said Mrs. Stanhope. "Of course it is quite reasonable on your part: but I don't think that Evelyn would like it to be hurried. It is not as if you might be ordered off at a moment's notice, like us poor military people. There is no reason to wait of course; but you can afford to take your time." She said this more from the natural feminine impulse of holding back in such matters, and not allowing her friend to be held cheap, than from any other reason.

"If you mean that you want some time to fill Miss Ferrars' place—"

"Mr. Rowland!" said Mrs. Stanhope again, this time with great indignation, "what do you mean by Miss Ferrars' place? I have known Evelyn all my life, and she is my dearest friend. Do you think I could fill up her place if I were to try?—and I certainly don't mean to try."

"I meant, of course, in respect to your children," said Mr. Rowland dryly. "You may do without your dearest friend by making an effort; but you can't do without a governess. Excuse me, I am a plain man, and call a spade, a spade."

This brutality of expression reduced Mrs. Stanhope to tears. "I have never treated her like a governess," she said. "If Evelyn's good heart made her help with the children, it was not my asking, it was her own idea. She did it because she liked it. I implored her not to take them out, feeling that you might imagine something of that sort. Men like you, Mr. Rowland, who have made a great deal of money, always, if you will excuse me, impute interested motives. I foresaw as much as that."

"Yes," he said cheerfully, "we are given to think of the money value of things. Not of friendship, you know, and all that, but of time and work, and so forth. We needn't enter into that question, for I'm sure we understand each other. And I don't want to put you to inconvenience. How much time will it take you to fill Miss Ferrars' place?"

Mrs. Stanhope was a clever little woman. She thought for a moment, in natural exasperation, of dismissing him summarily, and refusing to have anything to say to a man who had treated her so; and then she thought she would not do that. He was rich—he might be useful some time or other to the children; it would be foolish to make a breach with a friend who would remember nothing but the best of her (she did Evelyn this justice), and who would be kind to the children when they went home, and invite them for their holidays. So she subdued the natural anger that was almost on her lips, and gave vent to a harsh little laugh instead.

"You do always take such a prosaic view, and reduce everything to matter of fact," she said. "I can't afford to have any one in Evelyn's place, if you desire to speak of it so. Evelyn

has helped me with the children for love—I must do the best I can for them by myself when you take her away."

"Ah well," said Mr. Rowland, "then it is a real sacrifice, and you will suffer. I dare say you have a great deal to do. Would not little Molly Price be a help to you? She is a nice little girl, and she has nobody belonging to her, and I don't know what the poor little thing is to do."

Mrs. Stanhope made a pause before she replied, looking all the time keenly in the engineer's face as if she would have read his meaning in that way. But he was impassible as a wooden image. "Molly Price is a very nice little girl," she said slowly, trying all the time to make out what he meant, "and she would be of use, though far different from Evelyn. But how could I take up a girl like that, without any means of providing for her. I had thought of it," Mrs. Stanhope admitted, "but to take up her time just when she might be doing better for herself, and to give her false expectations as to what I could do for her—when it only can be for a few years, till we send the children home."

"I see," said Mr. Rowland; "but the fact is that Molly has a little income of her own, and all she wants is a home."

"A little income of her own!"

"Yes," he said, meeting with the most impenetrable look the lady's eager scrutiny. "Did you not know? enough to pay for her board if necessary. She only wants a home."

"I don't know what you can think of me," said Mrs. Stanhope with a little haste. "I should never ask her for any board. She would have her share of whatever was going; and of course if she liked to help me with the children's lessons—"

"You would allow her to do it, without any compensation? Don't explain, my dear lady—I know the situation perfectly. And in return for that little arrangement you will help me in getting Evelyn to consent to a speedy marriage. As soon as we understand each other, everything will be perfectly straight."

"You are such a dreadful man of business. I am not accustomed to such summary ways," said Mrs. Stanhope, with again a half hysterical laugh. She was very much afraid of him after this experience. No doubt everybody in the station had seen through her actions so far as Evelyn Ferrars was concerned, attributing design and motive where none had existed, and not making any allowances for the unconscious, or only half-conscious way in which she was led into taking an advantage of her friend. But nobody had ever ventured to put it into words. She was overawed by the clear sight and the courage, and also a little by the practical help of this downright man.

"Yes," he said, "I'm nothing if not a man of business. Well now, there is another matter. I want it to be a very grand affair."

She looked at him with eyes more wide open than ever, and with perceptions more fine than his, and a little gasp of restrained

horror in the thought—what would Evelyn say?—Evelyn who hoped it would be got over so quietly, that it might not be necessary to let people know: as if everything was not known from one end to another of the station almost before it was fully shaped in the brain from which it came!

"Yes," he said, "I see you're horrified—and, probably, so would Miss Ferrars be: so I want you to take the responsibility of everything, and put it on the ground of your gratitude to her, which must take some shape. I need not add, Mrs. Stanhope, if you will do this for me, that a cheque is at once at your disposal—to any amount you may think necessary."

Anger, humiliation, injured pride, a quick perception of advantage, a rapid gleam of pleasure, the thrill of delightful excitement at the thought of a great deal of money to spend, all darted through Mrs. Stanhope's mind, and glittered in her eager eyes. The disagreeable sentiments finally died away in the others which were more rational. To have the ordering of a great entertainment regardless of expense, and everybody at her feet, the providers of the same, and the guests, and indeed the whole community eager either for commissions or invitations! This was a temptation more than any woman could resist.

"Mr. Rowland," she said, "you are a very extraordinary man. But I must warn you that Evelyn will not like it, and she knows that we cannot afford it. Oh, I will try, if you have set your heart upon it, and just say as little to her as possible. I suppose something like what Mrs. Fawcett had when Bertha was married? And you must give me a list of all the people you want to invite."

"The Fawcetts' was a very humdrum affair," said Rowland critically, "quite an ordinary business. We must do a great deal better than that. And as for the invitations, ask everybody—beginning with the Governor. He'll be at Cumsalla about that time, and it will be a fine opportunity for him to visit the station in a semi-official way; and the General commanding, and the head of the district, and—"

"The Governor and the General!" Mrs. Stanhope gasped. She lay back in her chair in a half-fainting condition, yet with a keen conviction running through her mind like the flash of a gold thread, that to receive all these people in his own house, at a magnificent entertainment, would be such a chance as never could have been anticipated for Fred!

"*Carte blanche*," said Mr. Rowland, pressing in his enthusiasm her limp and hesitating hand.

Evelyn Ferrars came in a moment after with the children. She gave a smile to her future husband, and a glance of surprise at her friend, who had not yet recovered that shock of emotion. "What are you plotting?" she said: but did not mean it, though it was so near their real occupation. As for Mr. Rowland he was equal to the occasion, his faculties being so stirred

up and quickened by the emergency that he was as clear about it as if it had been a railway or a canal.

"We are plotting against you," he said, "and I think I have got Mrs. Stanhope to enter into my cause."

She looked from one to another with a little rising colour, divining what the subject would be. For once in her life Mrs. Stanhope was the dull one, not understanding her ally's change of front. She thought he was about to betray the conspiracy into which he had just seduced her, and that Evelyn's dislike and opposition would put an end to the delightful commotions of the marriage feast. "Oh," she cried, "don't tell her. She will never consent."

"She is so very reasonable that I hope she will consent," said Rowland. "My dear, it is just this, that there is no reason in the world why we should wait. I would like to be married as soon as the arrangements can be made. I think you won't refuse to see all the arguments in favour of this: and that there are very few against it."

Evelyn grew red and then grew pale, and finally with a little catch in her breath asked how long that would be?

"About three weeks," said Rowland, holding her hand and patting it as if to soothe a child.

Her limbs trembled a little under her, and she sat down in the nearest chair. "It is a little sudden," she said.

"My dear — let's get it over," said Rowland, his excitement showing through his usual sobriety like a face through a veil. "It's a great change, but it is the first that is the worst. You and I, as soon as we're together, will settle down into each other's ways, and be very happy. I know *I* shall, and some of it 'll rub off upon you. There's nothing in the world you can wish for that I shan't be ready to do. It is only the first step that will be a trouble. Let's get it over," he cried, with a quiver in his voice.

This is not the usual way in which a man speaks to his bride of their marriage, but it is a very true way if people would be more sincere. And especially in the circumstances in which he and she stood, not young either of them, and taking fully into consideration all the mingled motives that go to make a satisfactory union of two lives. Mrs. Stanhope, to whom the conventional was everything, listened in horror, wondering how Evelyn would take this; but Evelyn took it very well, agreeing in it, and seeing the good sense of what her betrothed said. It was the first step that would be the worst. After that habit would come in and make them natural to each other. And to get over that first step, and to settle down quietly to the mutual companionship in which she too felt there was every prospect of satisfaction and content, would no doubt be a good thing. It was somewhat overwhelming to look forward to such a tremendous change so soon. But she agreed silently that there was no reason for delay, and that all he said was perfectly

reasonable. "I cannot say anything against it," she said quietly. "I have no doubt you are right. It seems a little sudden. I could have wished a little more time."

"To think of it?" he said quietly. "Yes, my dear, if you had not made up your mind, that would be quite reasonable. But you have quite made up your mind."

"Yes," she said, "I have made up my mind."

"Then thinking of it is no longer of any use—because it is in reality done, and there's no way out of it. So the best thing is to carry the plan into execution, and think no more. Come," said Rowland, with an air of great complaisance, "I'll yield a little. I'll say a month—that will leave quite time enough for everything," he said, with a glance at Mrs. Stanhope, to which she replied with a slight, scarcely perceptible nod of the head. And then it was all arranged, without difficulty and without any knowledge on Miss Ferrars' part of the negotiations that had gone on before. Evelyn was much overwhelmed by the present her friend insisted upon making her, of her wedding dress, which turned out to be of the richest satin, and trimmed with the most beautiful lace, to the consternation of the bride, who remonstrated strongly. "How could you think of spending so much money? it is robbing the children—and it is far too grand for me." "My dear," said Mrs. Stanhope, the little hypocrite, "if you think how much you have done for the children, and saved me loads of money! I can afford that and more too out of what I have saved through you." Evelyn was confounded by this generosity, both of gift and speech; but as the dress did not arrive until the day before the ceremony, there was not much time to think about it, and her mind was naturally full of many subjects more important. The same cause kept her even from re remarking the extraordinary fuss in the station on the wedding-day—the flags flying, the carpets that were put down for the bride's procession, the decorations of the chapel. She scarcely saw them indeed, her mind being otherwise taken up. And when the Governor was brought up to her to be introduced, and the General followed him, both with an air of being royal princes at the least, amid the obsequious court of officers, Evelyn was easily persuaded that it was because they had chosen this day to make their inspection, and that their presence at the station was quite natural. "How fortunate for you that they are both here together," she said to Mrs. Stanhope. "Now surely Fred will get what you want so much for him." "Oh, he will get it, he will get it!" Mrs. Stanhope cried, hysterically. "Thanks to you, you darling, thanks to you!" "What have I to do with it?" said Evelyn. She was now Mrs. Rowland, and her mind was full of many things. It was a nuisance to have so many people about, all drawn, she supposed, in the train of the great men. As for the great men themselves, they were, of course, like any other gentlemen to Evelyn: they did not excite her by their greatness. She was a little surprised

by all the splendour, the sumptuous table, the crowd of people ; but took it for granted that one half at least was accidental, and that though it was quite unappropriate to an occasion so serious as a middle-aged marriage, it might be good for Fred Stanhope, who had so long been after an appointment, which always eluded his grasp.

Thus the bride accepted, without knowing it, the extraordinary honours that were done her, while all the station stood amazed by the number and greatness of the guests. The Lieutenant-Governor came without a murmur to compliment the great engineer. He would not have done it for Fred Stanhope, who was Brevet-Major, and thought himself a much greater man than Rowland. Neither would the General commanding have come to Fred unless he had known him in private, or had some special interest in him. But they all collected to the wedding of the man who had made the railroads and ditches—a proof, the military people thought, how abominably they were neglected by Government, though it could not sustain itself without them, not for a day ! They were, however, all of them deeply impressed by the greatness that had come upon Miss Ferrars, whom they had pitied and patronized, or even snubbed during her humiliation—by the splendour of her dress, and of the breakfast, and of the bridegroom's presents to her—and still more, by the manner in which she received the congratulations of the big-wigs without the least excitement, as if she had been all her life in the habit of entertaining the great ones of the earth. "Give you my word," said the little subaltern Bremner, who was an ugly little fellow, and had not much to recommend him, "she was not a bit more civil to the best of them than she was to me." "Looked as if she had been used to nothing but swells all her life," said another. "And as if she thought one just as good as another." On the whole, it was this that struck the company, especially the gentlemen, most—that she was just as civil to a little lieutenant as she was to the General commanding. The ladies had other things to distract their minds, the jewels, the bridal dress, the table. Such a commotion had never been made in the station before by any marriage : the Colonel's daughter's wedding feast was nothing in comparison : and that this should all be for the poor lady who had been nothing more than nursery governess to the Stanhopes, was quite bewildering. When the pair went away, the whole station turned out. It was, of course, quite late when they started, as they were only going as far as Cumsalla. The station was lit with coloured lamps, which blazed softly in the evening dusk, turning that oasis in the sand into a magical place. And the big moon got up with a bound into the sky, as she sometimes does when at the full, thrusting her large round lustrous face into the centre of all, as if to see what it meant. "By Jove, she's come out to look at you too," said the bridegroom to his bride. He was considerably excited, as was but

natural—enchanted with the success of all his plans, and the *éclat* of the whole performance. It was altogether a trying moment—for perhaps something of a vulgar fibre in the man was betrayed by his eagerness that it should be “a grand affair,” and his delight in its success.

But fortunately Evelyn was not in possession of her usual clear-sightedness, and she was still of opinion that the presence of the great people had been accidental, and the extraordinary sumptuousness of all the preparations a piece of loving extravagance on the part of the Stanhopes, which should not, if she could help it, go without its reward. “I hope,” she said, “the moon is loyal, and means it as a demonstration for the Lieutenant-Governor, as all these rejoicings have been already to-day.”

“Not a bit of it,” said Rowland; “all the demonstrations have been for you. The Governor and the General were only my—I mean, Fred Stanhope’s guests.”

Evelyn thought her husband must have had too much champagne: but she would not let this vex her or disturb her, seeing that it was so great an occasion. She calmed him with her soothing voice, and did not show the faint movement of fright and alarm that was in her breast.

“I am very glad they were there, anyhow,” she said, “for Fred’s sake. I hope he will get that appointment now. It was a fortunate chance for him.”

“It was no chance at all,” said Rowland, half piqued at her obtuseness. “I dare say it will be good for him as well: but it was all to do honour to you, my dear. I was determined that you should have all the honour and glory a bride could have. These swells came for you, and all that is for you, the illuminations, and everything. But when I saw you among them, Evelyn, I just said—how superior you were to everything of the sort. Talk about women’s heads being turned! You went from one place to another, and looked down upon it all like a queen.”

“Hush! hush!” she said; “indeed I did not look down upon anything. I did not think of it. I am very different from a queen. I am setting out upon a great voyage, and my mind is too full of that to think of swells, as you call them. You are the swell that occupies me most.”

“You are *my* queen,” said Rowland in his pride and delight, “and I am not good enough to tie your shoe: for I’ve been thinking of a great flash to dazzle them all, while you were thinking of—look back, there’s the bouquet going off! nobody in this presidency has seen such fireworks as they’ve got there to-night. I wanted every black baby of them all to remember the day of Miss Ferrars’ wedding. And now when I look at you, I’m ashamed of it all, to think such folly as that should be any honour to you!”

These devoted sentiments, however, were not the prevalent feeling at the station, where there was a ball after the fireworks

with everything of the most costly and splendid description, and where the health of the bride and bridegroom was drank with acclamations in far too excellent champagne. The ladies who had daughters looked out contemptuously over the heads of the subalterns to see if there was not another railway man in the background who would give a similar triumph to one of their girls. But young railway men are not any more satisfactory than young soldiers, and there was not another James Rowland far or near. When it was all over, Helen Stanhope rushed into her husband's arms with tears of joy, "You have got it, Fred," she said, "you have got it! and it's all on account of that kind thought you had (for it was your thought) when you went and fetched Evelyn Ferrars home out of her misery. It's brought a blessing as I knew it would."

Fred pulled his long moustache, and was not very ready in his reply. "I wish we hadn't got so tired of it, Nelly. It might be a kind thought at the first, but neither you nor I kept up to the start. God Almighty didn't owe us much for that."

"Oh, don't be profane," cried his wife, "taking God's name in vain! She didn't think so. What would she have done without us? And it's all thanks to her that we have got it at last."

## CHAPTER V

ROWLAND was able to carry out the programme which he had made for himself. He was a man to whom pieces of what is called luck are apt to come. Luck goes rather against the more serious claims of deserving, and is a thing which many of us would like to ignore—but it is hard to believe there is not something in it. One man who is just as worthy as another gets little that he wants, while his neighbour gets much; one who is just as unworthy as another gets all the blows while his fellow sinner escapes. Mr. Rowland had always been a lucky man. The things he desired seemed to drop into his mouth. That white house on the peninsula looking down upon Clyde, with its noble groups of trees, its fine woods behind, its lochs and inlets, and the great noble estuary at its foot, proved as soon as he set his heart upon it procurable. Had you or I wanted it, it would have been hopeless. Even he, though his luck was so great and he possessed that golden key which opens so many doors, was not able to move the noble proprietor to a sale: but he was permitted to rent it upon a long lease which was almost as satisfactory. "I should have preferred to buy it outright and settle it upon you, Evelyn," he said to his wife as they sat at breakfast in their London hotel, and he read aloud the lawyer's letter about this coveted dwelling. "But when one comes to think of it, you might not care for a big house in

Scotland after I am out of the way. It was to please me, I know, that you fixed on Scotland first. And then you might find it a trouble to keep up if you were alone."

"There is no occasion for thinking what I should do when I am alone, thank heaven," said Mrs. Rowland; "there is little likelihood of that."

"We must be prepared for everything," he said, with a beaming face, which showed how little the possibility weighed upon him. "However, perhaps it is just as well. Now, my dear, I will tell you what I am going to do. I am going up to the North to see after it all. You shall stay comfortably here and see the pictures and that sort of thing, and I shall run up and prepare everything for you, settle about Rosmore on the longest term I can get, look after the furniture a bit: well—I should like, you know, to look after the children a bit, too."

"To be sure you would," she said cheerfully. "You know I wanted you to have them here to meet us; but I understand very well, my dear James, that you would rather have your first day with them alone."

"It's not that," he said, rising and marching about the room—"it's not that. I'd rather see you with them, and taking to them than anything else in the world—but—perhaps I'd better go first and see how the land lies. You don't mind my leaving you—for a few days?" He said this with a sort of timid air which sat strangely on the otherwise self-confident and consciously fortunate man, so evidently inviting an expression of regret, that Evelyn could scarcely restrain a smile.

"I do mind very much," she said: and he was so genial, so kind, even so amusing in his simplicity, that it was strictly true. "I don't like at all to be left alone in London; but still I understand it perfectly, and approve—though I'd rather you stayed with me."

"Oh, if you approve," he said with a sort of shamed-faced laugh of satisfaction, "that is all I want; and you may be sure I'll not stay a moment longer than I can help. I never saw such a woman for understanding as you are. You know what a man means before he says a word."

It was on his wife's lips to tell him that he said innumerable words of which he was unaware, about quite other matters, on every kind of subject, but all showing the way his thoughts were tending, but she forbore; for sweet as it is to be understood, it is not so sweet to be shown how you betray yourself and lay bare your secrets unwittingly to the eye of day. It was not difficult to divine that his mind was now very much taken up by the thought of his children, not merely in the way of love and desire to see them, but from an overmastering anxiety as to how they would bear his wife's inspection, and what their future place in his life would be. In his many thoughts on the subject, he had decided that he must see them first and judge of that. During the three months in which he

had been seeing with Evelyn's eyes and perceiving with her mind, various things had changed for James Rowland. He was not quite aware of the agency, nor even that a revolution had taken place in him, but he was conscious of being more and more anxious about the effect which everything would produce on her, and specially, above all other things, of the effect that his children would produce. And he had said and done many things to make this very visible. For his own part he thought he had concealed it completely, and even that she gave him credit for too much feeling in imputing to him that eagerness to see them, to take his boy and his girl into his arms, which she had just said was so natural. He preferred to leave that impression on her mind. The feelings she imputed to him would have been her feelings, she felt sure, had she been coming home to her children after so long a separation. He could not say even to himself that this was his feeling. He had done without them for a very long time, perhaps he could have gone on doing without them. But what would Evelyn say to them? Would they be fit for her notice? Would they shock and startle her? What manner of beings would they seem in her eyes? It was on the cards that did she show any distaste for them, their father, who was their father after all, might resent it secretly or openly—for the claims of blood are strong; but at the present moment this was not at all in his thoughts. His thoughts were full of anxiety to know how they would please her, whether they were worthy to be brought at all into her presence. Mrs. Rowland would fain have assured him that his anxiety was unnecessary, and that, whatever his children were, they would be her first duty; but she was too understanding to do even this. All that she could do to help him in the emergency, was to accept his pretext and give him her approval, and tell him it was the most natural thing in the world. Useless to say that she was anxious too, wondering how the experiment would turn out. Whether the lowly upbringing would be so great a disadvantage as she feared, or whether the more primitive laws of that simpler social order would develop the better faculties, and suppress the conventional, as many a theorist believes. She was no theorist, but only a sensible woman who had seen a good deal of the world, and I fear that she did not believe in that suppression of the conventional. But whatever it was, she was anxious, as was natural, on a matter which would have so large an influence upon her entire life.

"I'll tell you what you can do to amuse yourself," he said, "when you're tired of the pictures and all that. Go to Wardour Street, Evelyn, and if you see anything that strikes your fancy, buy it. Buying is a great amusement. And we shall want all sorts of handsome things. Yes, I know. I'd put it into the best upholsterer's hands, and tell him to spare no expense. But that's not your way: I've learnt as much as that. And then there are carpets and curtains and things. Buy away—buy

freely. You know what is the right thing. What's the name of the people in Regent Street, eh? Well go there—buy him up if you please—the whole shop. I don't care for those flimsy green and yellow things. I like solid, velvet and damask, and so forth. But what does that matter if you do? I like what you like?"

"Do you want me to ruin you, James?" she said.

He laughed with that deep laugh of enjoyment which moneyed men bring out of the profoundness of their pockets and persons. "If it pleases you," he said. He was not afraid. That she should ruin him, was a very good joke. He had no desire for an economical wife. He wanted her to be extravagant, to get every pretty thing that struck her fancy. He had a vision of himself standing in the drawing-room which looked out upon the Clyde, and saying to everybody, "It's my wife's taste. I don't pretend to know about this sort of thing, except that it costs a lot of money. It's she that's responsible." And this anticipation pleased him to the bottom of his heart.

He went away next day, taking the train to Glasgow, not without sundry expressions of contempt for the arrangement of the Scotch trains, and the construction of the railways. "We do things better in India," he said. He was very compunctionous about going away, very sorry to leave her, very anxious that she should have everything that was possible to amuse her while he was gone; and exceedingly proud, yet distressed, that she should insist upon coming to the railway with him. It was such an early start for her, it would tire her, it was too much trouble, he said, with a beaming countenance. But when the train started, and Mr. Rowland was alone, he became suddenly very grave. He had not consented to her wish to have the children to meet them in London, because of the fancies that had seized him. If he could only have gone on paying largely for the children, knowing nothing but that they were happy and well, he would on the whole have been very thankful to make such an arrangement. But not only would it have been impossible to do so, but his wife would not have permitted it. She it was who talked of duty in respect to them, who planned everything that would have to be done. For his part, he would have been quite content to let well alone. But how often it happens that you cannot do that, but are compelled to break up rational arrangements and make fictitious ones, visibly altering everything for the worse. Rowland in his prophetic soul felt that this was what he was about to do. He was going to take his children out of the sphere they belonged to, to transport them to another with which they had nothing to do. And his mind altogether was full of compunctions. He had not after all shown their photographs or their letters to his wife. It would be less dreadful, he thought, that they should burst upon her in their native vulgarity and commonness all at once, than that she should be able to divine what they were like, and look

forward to the meeting with horror. Naturally he exaggerated the horror Evelyn would be likely to feel, as he deprecated her acuteness and power of divining the motive which made him so certain that he could not find the photographs. Evelyn knew the situation, indeed, almost as well, perhaps in some ways better, than he did. She divined what was to be expected from the two young people brought up upon a very liberal allowance by the aunt whose husband had been a working engineer in the foundry. She was sincerely sorry for them, as well as a little for herself, wondering how they would meet her, feeling it almost impossible that there should not be a little grudge and jealousy, a determination to make a stand against her, and to feel themselves injured and supplanted. She followed her husband in her mind with a little anxiety, hoping that he would not show himself too enlightened as to their deficiencies. And then there would be their aunt to reckon with, the mother's sister, the second mother. How would she bear it if the young people whom she thought perfect failed to please their father? It would be thought to be the stepmother's fault even before the stepmother appeared on the scene.

Evelyn returned to her hotel after seeing her husband off, with a countenance not less grave than his, and a strong consciousness that the new troubles were about to begin. She had shaken off her old ones. As for that familiar distress of not having any money, it had disappeared like last year's snow. It is a curious sensation to be exhorted to be extravagant when you have never had money to spend during your whole life, and there are few ladies who would not like to try that kind of revolution. Evelyn felt it exhilarating enough for a short time, though she had no extravagance in her; but she soon grew tired of the attempt to ruin her husband which gave him so much pleasure. She bought a few things both in Wardour Street and in the shop in Regent Street to which he had alluded, finding with a little trouble things that were not flimsy and diaphanous. But very soon she got tired; and by the third day it was strongly impressed upon her that to be alone, even with unlimited capacity of buying, is a melancholy thing. She had said to herself when she came to London that to recall herself to the recollection of old friends was the last thing she would desire to do. There was too much sorrow in her past: she did not want to remind herself of the time when she, too, used to come to London for the season, to do as everybody did, and go where everybody went. That was so long ago, and everything was so changed. But it is strange how the firmest resolution can be overset in a moment by the most accidental touch. She was sitting by herself one bright morning, languid, in the bare conventional sitting-room of the hotel, which was by no means less lonely because it was the best sitting-room, and cost a great deal of money in the height of the season. She had received a letter from her husband, in which she had been trying

hard to read between the lines what were his ideas about his children, whether they had pleased him. The letter was a little stiff, she thought, guarded in its expression. "Archie is quite a man in appearance, and Marion a nice well-grown girl. They have had every justice done them so far as their health is concerned," Mr. Rowland wrote; but he did not enter into any further details. Was he pleased? had the spell of nature asserted itself? did he fear her criticism, and had he determined that no one should object to them? Evelyn was much concerned by these questions, which she could not answer to her own satisfaction. The thing she most feared was the very natural possibility that he might resent her interference, and allow no opinion to be expressed on the subject, whatever might be his own. And it vexed her that he said nothing more, closed his heart, or at least his lips, and gave no clue to what he was thinking. It was the first time this had occurred—to be sure, it was the first time he had communicated his sentiments to her by way of writing, and probably he had no such freedom in expressing himself that way as by word of mouth. Whatever the fact might be, Evelyn felt herself cast down, she scarcely knew why. She vaguely divined that there was no satisfaction in his own mind, and to be thrust away from his confidence in this respect would be very painful to her, as well as making an end of all attempts on her part for the good of the children.

Evelyn was in this melancholy mood, sitting alone, and with everything suspended in her life, feeling a little as if she had been brought away from India where she had at least a definite known plan and work, to be stranded on a shore which had grown cold, unknown, and inhospitable to her, when in the newspaper which she had languidly taken up she saw suddenly the name of an old friend. She had said to herself that she would not seek to renew acquaintance with her old friends: but it is one thing to say that when one feels no need of them, and another to reflect when you are lonely and in low spirits, that there is some one in the next street, round the next corner, who would probably receive you with a smile of delight, fall upon your neck, and throw open to you the doors of her heart. Evelyn represented to herself when she saw this name that here was one of whom she would have made an exception in any circumstances, one who would certainly have sought her out in her trouble, and would rejoice in her well-being. She half resisted, half played with the idea for half the morning—at one time putting it away, at another almost resolved to act upon it. And at length the latter inclination carried the day. Part of the reluctance arose from the fact that she did not know how to introduce herself. Would any one in London have heard of the wedding far away at an obscure station in India? Would any one imagine that it was she who was the bride? She took out her new card with Mrs. James Rowland upon it, in a curious shamefacedness, and wrote Evelyn Ferrars upon it with an

unsteady hand. But she had very little time to entertain these feelings of uncertainty. It was so like Madeline to come flying with her arms wide open all the length of the deep London drawing-room against the light, with that shriek of welcome. Of course she would shriek. Evelyn knew her friend's ways better, as it proved, than she knew that friend herself.

"So it is you! At last! I meant to go out this very day on a round of all the hotels to find you; but I couldn't believe you wouldn't come, for you knew where to find me."

"At last!" said Evelyn astonished. "How did you know I was in London at all?"

"Oh, my dear Eve, don't be affected," cried this lively lady, "as if a great person like Mr. Rowland could travel and bring home his bride without all the papers getting hold of it! Why, we heard of your wedding—dress and the diamonds he gave you, almost as soon as you did. They were in one of the ladies' papers of course. And so, Evelyn, after waiting so long, you have gone and made a great match after all."

"Have I made a great match? indeed I did not know it. I have married a very good man, which is of more consequence," said Evelyn, with almost an air of offence. But that, of course, was absurd, for Lady Leighton had not the most distant idea of offending.

"Oh, that goes without saying," she said lightly; "every new man is more perfect than any other that went before him. But you need not undervalue your good things all the same. I suppose there were advantages in respect to the diamonds? He would be able to pick them up in a way that never happens to us poor people at home."

"I dare say he will be glad to tell you if you want to know; but, Madeline, that is not what interests me most. There are so many things I should like to hear of."

"Yes; to be sure," said Lady Leighton, growing grave; "but, my dear, if I were you I wouldn't inquire—not now, when everything is so changed."

"What is so changed?" said Evelyn, more and more surprised. Her friend made a series of signals with her eyes, indicating some mystery, and standing, as Evelyn now perceived, in such a position as to screen from observation an inner room from which she had come. The pantomime ended by a tragic whisper: "He is there—don't see him. It would be too great a shock. And why should you, when you are so well off?"

"Who is there? And why should I not see, whoever it is? I can't tell what you mean," Mrs. Rowland said.

"Oh, if that is how you feel!" said her friend; "but I would not in your place."

At this moment Evelyn heard a sound as of shuffling feet, and looking beyond her friend's figure, saw an old man, as she supposed, with an ashy countenance and bowed shoulders, coming towards them. At the first glance he seemed very old, very

feeble ; some one whom she had never seen before—and it took him some time to make his way along the room. Even when he came near she did not recognize him at first. He put out feebly a lifeless hand, and said, in a thick mumbling tone : “Is this Evelyn Ferrars ? but she has grown younger instead of older. Not like me.”

Evelyn rose in instinctive respect to the old man whom she did not know. She thought it must be some old relative of Madeline, some one who had known her as a child. She answered some indifferent words of greeting, and dropped hastily as soon as she had touched it, the cold and flabby hand. It could be no one whom she had known, though he knew her.

“Oh, Mr. Saumarez,” said Lady Leighton, “I am so sorry this has happened. I do hope it will not hurt you. Had I not better ring for your man ? You know that you must not do too much or excite yourself. Let me lead you back to your chair.”

A faint smile came over the ashen face. “She doesn’t know me,” he said.

Oh, heaven and earth, was this *he* ? A pang of wonder, of keen pain and horror, shot through Evelyn like a sudden blow, shaking her from head to foot. It was not possible ! the room swam round her, and all that was in it. *He* ! The name had been like a pistol shot in her head, and then something, a look, as if over some chilly snowy landscape, a gleam of cold light had startled her even before the name. “Is it —— is it ? I did not know you had been ill,” she said, almost under her breath.

“Yes, it is my own self, and I have been ill, extremely ill ; but I am getting better. I will sit down if you will permit me. I am not in the least excited ; but very glad to see Mrs. Rowland and offer her my congratulations. I am not in such good case myself,—nobody is likely to congratulate me.”

“I do not see that,” said Lady Leighton. “You are so very much better than you have been.”

“That’s very true. I may be congratulated so far. I should offer to call at your hotel on Mr. Rowland, but I fear my strength is not to be trusted. I am more glad than I can tell you to have seen you looking so well and happy, after so many years. Lady Leighton, I think I will now accept your kind offer to ring for my man.” He put out the gray tremulous hand again, and enfolded that of Evelyn in it. “I am very glad, very glad,” he said with emphasis, in a low but firm tone, Lady Leighton having turned away to ring the bell, “to have seen you again, and so well, and so young, and I don’t doubt so happy. My wife is dead, and I am a wreck as you see——”

“I am very sorry, very sorry.”

“I knew you would be : while I am glad to have seen you so well. And I have two children whom I shall have to leave to the tender mercies of the world. Ah, we have trials in our youth that we are tragical about ; but believe me these are the real tragedies of life,” he said.

And then there came something almost more painful still. His servant came into the room and put on his coat and buttoned him into it as if he had been a child, then raised him smartly from his chair, drew an arm within his own, and led him away. The two ladies heard them go slowly shuffling down-stairs, the master leaning upon the servant. Evelyn had grown as pale as marble. She remembered now to have seen an invalid chair standing at the door. And this was he who had filled her young life with joy, and afterwards with humiliation and pain. "Oh," she cried, "and that is he, that is he!"

"I wish I could have spared you the sight," said Lady Leighton, "but when he saw your card—he looked at it, when I dropped it out of my hand: people ill like that are so inquisitive—I knew how it would be. Well, you must have seen him sooner or later. It is as well to get it over. He is a wreck, as he says. And oh the contrast, Evelyn! He could not but see it—you so young-looking, so happy and well-off. What a lesson it is."

"I don't want to be a lesson," said Evelyn, with a faint smile. "Don't make any moral out of me. He was a man always so careful of himself. What has he done to be so broken down?"

"Can you ask me what he has done, Evelyn? He has thought of nothing but himself and his own advantage all his life. Don't you think we all remember—"

"I hope that you will forget—with all expedition," cried Evelyn quickly. "I have no stone to cast at him. I am very very sorry." The moisture came into her kind eyes. Her pity was so keen that it felt like a wound in her own heart.

"Oh, Evelyn, I would give the world this had not happened. I did all I could to keep you from seeing he was there. Such a shock for you without any warning! I know, I know that a woman never forgets."

"Oh," said Mrs. Rowland, hastily, "that has nothing to do with it. I never was sentimental like you; and a spectacle like that is not one to call up tender recollections, is it? But I am very sorry. And he has children, to make him feel it all the more."

"Yes," said Lady Leighton doubtfully, "he has children. I must tell you that he still has a way of working on the feelings. Oh, poor man, I would not say a word that was unkind; but now that he has nothing but his troubles to give him an interest, he likes, perhaps, to make the most of his troubles. I wish you had not had this shock to begin with, dear Evelyn, your first day at home."

## CHAPTER VI

DOES a woman never forget? It was not true perhaps as Lady Leighton said it, but it would be vain to say that Evelyn was not moved to the bottom of her heart by the sight of her former lover. He, about whom all the dreams of her youth had been woven, who had deserted her, given her up in her need, and humiliated her before all the world. To see him at all would not have been without effect upon her, but to see him so humiliated in his turn, so miserable a wreck, while she was in all the flush of a late return to youth and well-being, happy in a subdued way, and on the height of prosperity, gave her a shock of mingled feeling, perhaps more strong than any she had experienced since he rent her life in two, and covered her (as she felt) with shame. But it was not any re-awakening of the extinguished fire which moved Evelyn. She could not forget, it was true, and yet she could easily have forgotten, the relation in which she had stood to him, and her old adoration of him, at all times the visionary love of a girl, giving a hundred fictitious excellencies to the hero she had chosen. This was not what had occurred to her mind. Had she seen him in his ancient supremacy of good fortune—a well-preserved, middle-aged Adonis, smiling perhaps, as she had imagined, at her late marriage with a rich *parvenu*, keeping the superior position of a man who has rejected a love bestowed upon him, and never without that complacent sense of having “behaved badly,” which is one of the many forms of vanity—the sight would not have disturbed her, except, perhaps, with a passing sensation of anger. But to see him in his downfall gave Evelyn a shock of pain. It was too terrible to think of what he had been and what he was. Instead of the sense of retribution which her friend had suggested, Evelyn had a horrified revulsion of feeling, rebellious against any such possibility, angry lest it should be supposed that she could have desired the least and smallest punishment, or could take any satisfaction from its infliction. She would have hated herself could she have thought this possible. There is an old poem in which the story of Troilus and Cressida, so often treated by the poets in its first bloom, has an after episode, an administration of poetic justice, in which all the severity of the mediæval imagination comes forth. The false Cressida falls into deepest misery in this tragic strain, and becomes a leper, the last and most awful of degradations. And while she sits with her wretched companions, begging her miserable bread by the roadside, the injured Troilus, the true knight, rides by. Evelyn, though I do not suppose she had ever seen Henryson’s poem, felt the same anguish of pity which arose in the bosom of the noble Greek. If she could have sent in secret the richest offering, and stolen aside out of the way

not to insult the sufferer even by a look, she would have done it. Her pity was an agony, but it had nothing in it akin to love.

Lady Leighton, however, did not leave her friend any time to brood over this painful scene. She had no intention to confine to a mere interchange of courtesies this sudden reappearance upon the scene of a former companion whom, indeed, she could not help effectually in the period of her humiliation, but to whom now, in her newly acquired wealth, Madeline felt herself capable of being of great use. And it must not be supposed that it was purely a vulgar inclination to connect herself with rising fortunes, or to derive advantage from her friend's new position that moved her. It was in its way a genuine and natural desire to further her old companion, whom she had been fond of, but for whom she could do nothing when she was poor and her position desperate. The love of a little fuss and pleasant meddling was the alloy of Lady Leighton's gold, not any mercenary devotion to riches or thought of personal advantage. It was certainly delightful to have somebody to push and help on who could be nothing but a credit to you ; to whom it would be natural to spend much money ; and who yet was "one of our own set" and a favourite friend.

On the second day accordingly after that meeting which had been so painful an entry into the old world, Lady Leighton came in upon Evelyn as she sat alone, not very cheerful, longing for her husband and the new home in which she should find her natural place. She came with a rustle and bustle of energy, and that pretty air of having a thousand things to do, which is distinctive of a lady in the height of the season. "Here you are, all alone," she said, "and so many people asking for you. Why didn't you come to luncheon yesterday ? We waited half an hour for you. And then we expected you at five o'clock, and I had Mary Riversdale and Alice Towers to meet you, who had both *screamed* to hear you were in town. And you never came ! And of course they thought me a delusion and a snare, for they had given up half a dozen engagements. Why didn't you come ?"

"I am very sorry," Evelyn said.

"That is no excuse," cried her friend. "You were upset by the sight of that wretched Ned Saumarez. And I don't wonder ; but I believe he is not half so ill as he looks, and up to a good deal of mischief still. However, that is not the question. I have come about business. What are you going to do about a house ?"

"About a house ?"

"I came to be quite frank with you to-day. When your husband comes back you ought to have something ready for him. My dear Evelyn, I am going to speak seriously. If you want to know people, and be properly taken up, you must have a house for the rest of the season. A hotel is really not the

thing. You ought to be able to have a few well chosen dinner parties, and to see your friends a little in the evening. There is nothing like a speciality. You might go in for Indian people. Let it be known that people are sure to meet a few Eastern big-wigs, and your fortune would be made."

"But —" cried Evelyn aghast.

"Don't tell me," said Lady Leighton solemnly, "that you don't want to know people, and be properly taken up again. Of course you don't require to be pushed into society like a mere millionaire who is nobody. You are quite different. People remember you. They say to me, 'Oh, that is the Miss Ferrars of the Gloucestershire family.' Everybody knows who you are. You have nothing to do but to chose a nice house—and there are plenty at this time of the season to be had for next to nothing—and to give a few really nice dinners. Doing it judiciously, finding out when people are free, for of course it does happen now and then that there will be a day when there is nothing going on, you can manage it yet. And everybody knows that your husband is very rich. You could do enough at least to open the way for next season, and make it quite simple. But, my dear, in that case you must not go on wasting these precious days, without deciding on anything and living in a hotel."

"You take away my breath," said Mrs. Rowland. "I have not the least desire to be taken up by society. If I had, I think what I saw the other day would have been enough to cure me; but I never had the smallest thought—my husband is rich, I suppose, but he does not mean to spend his money so. He means to live—at home—among his own people."

Evelyn's voice, which had been quite assured, faltered a little and trembled as she said these last words.

"Among his own people!" said Lady Leighton, with a little shudder. "Do you mean to say —! Now, my dear Evelyn, you must forgive me, for perhaps I am quite wrong. I have heard about Mr. Rowland. I have always heard that he was—that he had been—" Madeline Leighton was a person of great sense. She saw in Evelyn's naturally mild eyes that look of the dove enraged, which is more alarming as a danger signal than any demonstration on the part of the eagle. She concluded hastily, "A very excellent man, the nicest man in the world."

"You were rightly informed," said Mrs. Rowland, somewhat stiffly. "My husband is as good a man as ever lived."

"But to go and settle among—his own people! perhaps they are not all as good as ever lived. They must be a little different to what you have been used to. Don't you think you should stipulate for a little freedom? Frank's people are as good as ever lived, and they are all of course, so to speak, in our own set. But if I were condemned to live with them all the year round, I should die. Evelyn! it is, I assure you, a very serious

matter. One should begin with one's husband seriously, you know. Very good women who always pretend to like everything they are wanted to do, and smother their own inclinations, are a mistake, my dear. They always turn out a mistake. In the first place they are not true any more than you thought me to be the other day. They are cheating, even if it is with the best of motives. And in the end they are always found out. And to pretend to like things you hate is just being as great a humbug as any make-believe in society. Besides, your husband would like it far better if you provided him with a little amusement, and kept his own people off him for part of the year."

"I don't think Society would amuse him at all," said Evelyn, with a laugh. "And besides, he has no people that I know of—so that you need not be frightened for me—except his own children," she added, with involuntary gravity.

Lady Leighton gave vent to an "O!" which was rounder than the O of Giotto. Horror, amazement, compassion were in it. "He has children!" she said faintly.

"Two—and they, of course, will be my first duty."

"Girls?"

"A girl and a boy."

"Oh, you poor thing!" said Lady Leighton, giving her friend an embrace full of sympathy. "I am so sorry for you! I hope they are little things."

Evelyn felt a little restored to herself when she was encountered with such solemnity. "You have turned all at once into a Tragic Muse," she said; "you need not be so sorry for me. I am not—sorry for myself."

"Oh, don't be a humbug," said Lady Leighton severely; "of all humbugs a virtuous humbug is the worst. You hate it! I can see it in your eyes."

"My eyes must be very false if they express any such feeling. To tell the truth," she added smiling, "I am a little frightened—one can scarcely help being that. I don't know how they may look upon me. I shouldn't care to be considered like the stepmother of the fairy tales."

"Poor Evelyn!" said Lady Leighton. She was so much impressed as to lose that pliant readiness of speech which was one of her great qualities. Madeline's resources were generally supposed by her friends to be unlimited: she had a suggestion for everything. But in this case she was silenced—for at least a whole minute. Then she resumed, as if throwing off a load.

"You should have the boy sent to Eton, and the girl to a good school. You can't be expected to take them out of the nursery. And for their sakes, Evelyn, if for nothing else, it is *most important* that you should know people and take your place in society. It makes all my arguments stronger instead of weaker: you must bring Miss Rowland out—when she grows up."

Evelyn could not but laugh at the ready advice which always

sprang up like a perpetual fountain, in fine independence of circumstances. "Dear Madeline," she said, "there is only one drawback, which is that they are grown up already. My stepdaughter is eighteen. I don't suppose she will go to school, if I wished it ever so much—and I have no wish on the subject. It is a great responsibility; but provided they will accept me as their friend—"

"And where have they been brought up? Is she pretty? are they presentable? She must have money, and she will marry, Evelyn; there's hope in that. But instead of departing from my advice to you on that account, I repeat it with double force. You *must* bring out a girl of eighteen. She must see the world. You can't let her marry anybody that may turn up in the country. Take my word for it, Evelyn," she added solemnly, "if it was necessary before, it is still more necessary now."

"She may not marry at all—there are many girls who do not."

"Don't let us anticipate anything so dreadful," said the woman of the world. "A stepdaughter who does not marry is too much to look forward to. No, my dear, that is what you must do. You must bring her out well and get her off. Is she pretty? for, of course, she will be rich."

"I don't know. I know little about the children. My husband has been in India for a long time. He does not himself know so much of them as he ought."

A shiver went through Lady Leighton's elegant toilette. She kissed her friend with great pity. "I will stand by you, dear," she said, "to the very utmost of my ability. You may be sure that anything I can do to help you;—but put on your bonnet in the meantime. I have a list of houses I want you to look at. You can look at them at least—that does no harm; if not for this season, it will be a guide to you for the next. And it is always more or less amusing. After that there are some calls I have to make. Come, Evelyn, I really cannot leave you to mope by yourself here."

And Evelyn went. She was lonely, and it was a greater distraction after all than buying cabinets in Wardour Street, and looking over even the most lovely old Persian rugs. Looking at houses, especially furnished houses, to be let for the season, is an amusement which many ladies like. It is curious to see the different ideas, the different habits of the people who want to let them, and to contrast the house that is furnished to be let and the house that is furnished to be lived in, which are two different things. Lady Leighton enjoyed the afternoon very much. She pointed out to her friend just how she could arrange the rooms in every house, so that the liveliest hopes were left in the mind of each householder; and by the time they got back to Madeline's own house to tea, she declared herself too tired to do anything but lie on the sofa, and talk over all they had seen. "It lies between Wilton Place and Chester Street," she said.

The last is the best house, but then the other is better furnished. That boudoir in Wilton Place is a little gem : or you might make the drawing-room in Chester Street exceedingly pretty with those old things you are always buying. The carpets are very bad, I must allow, but with a few large rugs—and it is such a good situation. Either of them would do. And so cheap !—a mere nothing for millionaires like you."

Evelyn allowed, not without interest, that the houses were very nice. She allowed herself to discuss the question. Visions floated before her eyes of old habits resumed, and that flutter of movement, of occupation, of new things to see and hear, which forms the charm of town, caught her with its fascination. To step a little, just a little, not much, into the living stream, to feel the movement, though she was not carried away by it, was a temptation. At a distance it is easy to condemn the frivolity, the hurry, the rush of the season ; but to touch its glittering surface over again after a long interval of banishment, and feel the thrill of the tide of life which is never still, which quickens the pulse and stimulates the mind, has a great attraction in it. Evelyn forgot for the moment the shock which had so driven her back from all pleasant projects. She allowed herself to see with Madeline's eyes. No doubt it might be pleasant. It was now June, and a month of society in the modified way in which a late arrival, so long separated from all old acquaintances can alone hope to enjoy it, would not be too great an interruption to the home life, and it would leave time to have everything done at Rosmore. And it would postpone a little the introduction to many new elements of which she was afraid. She had been disappointed when her husband left her, to have the entrance upon her new life postponed at all, and the period of suspense prolonged. But that feeling began to give way to other feelings—feelings more natural. After the unutterably subdued life she had led in India, and before the novel and strange existence which was now waiting for her as the mother and guide of human creatures unknown to her, might not a moment of relaxation, of individuality, be worth having ? She had been Mrs. Stanhope's friend without any identity, with a life which was all bound up in the obscure rooms of the bungalow ; and she was Mr. Rowland's wife, the mother of his children, the head of his house, in an atmosphere altogether novel to her, and which of her, in her natural personality, knew nothing. Society was not her sphere, yet it was the nearest to any sphere in which she could stand as herself. And she allowed herself to be seduced. She thought that perhaps for a little James might enjoy it. Chester Street is very near the Park. To walk out in the June mornings, when even the London air is made of sunshine, to the Row and see the dazzling stream flow by—the beautiful horses, the beautiful people—girls and men whom it was a sight to see—to meet every five minutes an old acquaintance, to hear once more that babble about people and personal

incidents which is so trivial to the outsider, but always attractive to those who know the names and can understand the situations about which everybody talks ! And in the evening, to sit at the head of the table with perhaps a statesman, perhaps a poet, somebody of whom the whole world has heard, at her right hand, penetrating even the society chatter with a thread of meaning ! Evelyn forgot for the moment various things that would not be so pleasant—that her husband would like to entertain a lord, but would not probably know much more about him, however great he might be—that he might be inclined to tell the price of his wine, and laugh the rich man's laugh of satisfaction at the costliness of everything, and the ruin that awaited him in London. These little imperfections Evelyn was perhaps too sensitive of, but on this occasion they stole out of her mind. She began to discuss Chester Street with a gradually growing satisfaction. Or Park Lane ? There was a house in Park Lane—and for a hundred pounds or two of rent, if he liked the scheme at all, James would not hesitate. She was quite sure of him so far as that was concerned.

"Chester Street has its advantages," said Lady Leighton. "It is such a capital situation ; and yet quite modest, no pretension. It is more like you, Evelyn. So far as Mr. Rowland is concerned, I feel sure, though I don't know him, that he would prefer Belgrave Square, and the biggest rent in London."

"How do you know that ?" said Evelyn with an uneasy laugh.

"Because I know my millionaires," said Lady Leighton gravely. "But for the end of the season, and an accidental sort of thing as it will be, I should not recommend that. Next year if you come up in May, and on quite *lancé* ; but for this year, when you are only feeling your way—Chester Street, Evelyn ! that's my idea—and a few small parties, quite select, to meet some Indian man. I don't want you to have just a common success like the vulgar rich people. Dear, no ! quite a different thing—a success *d'estime*—a real good foundation for anything you might like to do after. You might take Marlborough House then—if you could get it—and stick at nothing."

"We shall not attempt to get Marlborough House," said Evelyn, with a laugh, "nor even anything more moderate. Mr. Rowland does not care for town. But I confess that you have beguiled me, Madeline, with your flattering tongue. I think—I should rather like—if he approves of the idea."

"My dear, it is surely enough if you approve of the idea. He is not going to make you a black slave."

"My husband is sure to approve of what I do," said Evelyn, with a little dignity. "But I prefer to consult him all the same. He may have formed other engagements. It may be necessary to go up to Rosmore at once. But I confess that I should like—if there is nothing else in the way."

"And that is all," cried Lady Leighton, "after all my efforts !

Well, if it must be so, telegraph to him—or at least tell him to answer you by telegraph : for that house might still be swept up while you are hesitating. Oh, I know it is rather late for a house to be snapped up. But when you want a thing it immediately becomes a chance that some one else will want it too. I shall look for you to-morrow to luncheon, Evelyn : now, mind that you don't fail me, and we'll go out after and settle about it, and do all that is necessary. Shouldn't you like now to go and look at a few more Persian rugs ? and that little Chippendale set you were telling me of ? The next best thing to spending money oneself is helping one's friend to do it," said Lady Leighton. "Indeed, some people think it almost more agreeable : for you have the pleasure, without the pain of paying. Come, Evelyn, and we can finish with a turn in the Park before dinner. I always like to get as much as possible into every day."

It was indeed a necessity with the town lady to get as much as she could into her day. If she had not gone to choose the rugs on her friend's account, she would have had to make for herself some other piece of business equally important. There was not an hour that had not its occupation. Looking at the houses had filled the afternoon with bustle and excitement : and doing all that was necessary, *i.e.* rearranging all the furniture, covering up the dingy carpets, choosing new curtains, etc., would furnish delightful "work" for two or three. Lady Leighton had never an hour that was without its engagement, as she said with a sigh. She envied her friends who had leisure. She had not a moment to herself.

And Evelyn wrote a hurried letter to her husband about the Chester Street house, and the pleasure of staying in town for a week or two, as she put it vaguely, and introducing him to some of her friends. She even in her haste mentioned Lord and Lady Leighton, knowing that he had a little weakness for a title—a thing she was sadly ashamed of when she came to think. But the best of us are so easily led away.

## CHAPTER VII

THE bustle of this afternoon's occupation, which left her no time to think before she was deposited at her hotel for her late dinner, put serious thoughts out of Evelyn's mind ; and even when that hasty meal, over which she had no inclination to linger, was ended, and she had relapsed into the comfort of a dressing-gown, and lay extended in an easy-chair beside the open windows, hearing all the endless tumult of town, half with a sense of being left out, and half with self-congratulations over her quiet, she was little inclined to reflection. The echo of all that she had been doing hung about her, and that pleasant little

commotion of choice, of arrangement and organization, which is involved in a new house and new settlement, absorbed her thoughts. They went very fast, setting a thousand things stirring. There is nothing that moves the woman of to-day more than the task of making a house pretty and harmonious, and forming a version of home out of any spare hired dwelling. Evelyn had anticipated having this to do for Rosmore. But James had somehow taken it out of her hands. He had gone to prepare it for her, not thinking that she would have liked much better to have a share in the doing. And now to think of having her little essay for herself, and setting up a temporary home out of her own fancy, turning a few bare rooms into a place full of fragrance and brightness, pleased her fancy. She listened to the carriages flying past with an endless roll of sound, so many of them conveying society to its favourite haunts, to one set of brilliant rooms after another, to new combinations of smiling faces and beautiful toilettes, with a half melancholy half pleasing excitement. To be above, and listen to that sound, is always slightly melancholy, and Evelyn could not but think a little of the pleasure of emerging from the silence of solitude, of seeing and being seen, of finding friends from whom she had been long parted, and a dazzling vision of life which was all the brighter from being partially forgotten, and never very perfectly known. From where she sat she could see the glare of the carriage lamps, and now and then some glimpses of the persons within—a lady's white toilette surging up at the window, or a brilliant shirt front looking almost like another lamp inside. It amused her to watch that stream flow on.

And then there came over her a dark shadow, the vision of the man who had been so young and so full of life when she saw him last, and who was so death-like and fallen now. The thought chilled her suddenly to the heart. She drew back from the window, and wrapped herself in a shawl, with the shudder of a cold which was not physical but spiritual. In the midst of all that ceaseless loudness of life and movement and pleasure, and of the visions which had visited her own brain of lighted rooms, and animated face, and brilliant talk—to drop back to that wreck of existence, the helpless man leaning upon his servant's arm, bundled up like a piece of goods, unresisting, compelled to submit to those cares which were an indignity, yet which were necessary to very existence! The echo came back to Evelyn's heart. If there was in her mind, who in reality cared for none of these things, a little sentiment of loneliness as she saw the stream of life go by, what must there be in his, to whom society was life, and who was cut off from all its pleasures? Her imagination followed him to the prison of his weakness, his melancholy home, with this imperative servant who tended and ruled all his movements, for his sole society. God help him! What a condition to come to, after all the experiences of his life!

Should she ever meet him again, she had asked herself, partly with a vaguely formed wish of saying some word of kindness to so great a sufferer, partly with a shrinking reluctance to give herself the pain of looking upon his humiliation again? But it was almost as great a shock as on the first meeting to see him coming along the Park as she walked to Lady Leighton's next day. He was being drawn along in his wheeled chair by the man who had bundled him up so summarily on the previous occasion. Evelyn would have hurried on, but he held out his hand appealingly, and even called her name as she endeavoured to pass. "Won't you stop and speak to me?" he said. It was impossible to resist that appeal. She stood by him looking down upon his ashy countenance, the loose lips and half-open mouth which babbled rather than talked, and which it required an effort at first to understand. "Will you sit down a little and talk?" he said. "It's a pleasure I don't often have, a talk with an old friend. Sit there, and I'll have my chair drawn beside you. I hope you won't think yourself a victim, as I fear some of my friends do——"

"Oh no," she said anxiously, "don't think so: I—was going to see Madeline—but it will not matter——"

"Oh, she can spare you for half an hour."

It was with dismay that Evelyn heard this, but how could she resist the power of his weakness and fallen estate? He had his chair drawn up in front of the one she had taken, very near her, and with a gesture dismissed his servant, who went and took up his position with his back against a tree, and his eyes upon the master who was also his patient. The sight of this reminder of his extreme weakness and precarious condition was almost more than Evelyn's nerves could bear.

"We are a wonderful contrast, you and I," he said; "you so young and fair, just entering upon life, and I leaving it, a decrepit old man."

"You know," she said, "that I am not young and fair any more than you are old. I am grieved to see you so ill; but I hope——"

"There is no room for hope. To go on like this for many years, which they say is possible, is not much worth hoping for, is it? Still, I would bear it for various reasons. But I am not likely to be tried. I am a wreck—and my wife only lived two years—I suppose you knew that."

"I had heard that Mrs. Saumarez died."

"Yes—I'd have come to you for consolation had I dared."

"It was better not," said Evelyn, while a subdued flush of indignation shot out much against her will from her downcast eyes.

"That was what I thought. When a thing does not succeed at first it is better not to try to get fire out of the ashes," he said didactically; "but between us two, there is no difficulty in seeing which has the best of it. I should like to call and make Mr.

Rowland's acquaintance. But you see the plight in which I am. It is almost impossible for me to get up a stair—”

“My husband—does not mean to remain in London,” she said hurriedly. “We are going to Scotland at once.”

“To a place he has bought, I suppose? I hear that he has a great fortune—and I am most heartily glad of it for your sake.”

She replied hurriedly, with a slight bow of acquiescence. It was the strangest subject to choose for discussion: but yet it was very difficult to find any subject. “You told me the other day,” she said, “about your children.”

“I am very thankful to you for asking. I wanted to speak of them. I have a boy and girl, with only a year between them—provided for more or less; but who is to look after them when I am gone? Their mother's family I never got on with. They are the most worldly-minded people. I should not like my little Rosamond to fall into their hands.”

There was a pause: for Evelyn found that she had nothing to say. It was so extraordinary to sit here, the depositary of Edward Saumarez's confidences, listening to the account of his anxieties—she who was so little likely to be of any help.

“How old is she?” she managed to ask at last.

“Rosamond? How long is it since we were—so much together? A long time. I dare say more than twenty years.”

“Something like that.”

“Ah well,” he said with a sigh, “I married about a year after. They're nineteen and twenty, or thereabouts. Rosamond, they tell me, ought to be brought out; but what is the good of bringing out a girl into the world who has no one to protect her? Nobody but a worldly-minded aunt who will sell her for what she will bring—marry her off her hands as quickly as possible; that is all she will think of. It may seem strange to you, but my little girl is proud of me, dreadful object as I am.”

“Why should it seem strange? It would be very unnatural if she was not.”

“She is the only one in the world who cares a brass farthing whether I live or die.” As Evelyn raised her eyes full of pity, she was suddenly aware that he was watching her, watching for some tell-tale flush or gesture which should give a tacit denial to what he said. He, like Lady Leighton, was of opinion that a woman never forgets, and dreadful object as he allowed himself to be, the man's vanity would fain have been fed by some sign that the woman beside him, whom he had abandoned so basely, whose heart he had done his best to break, still cherished something of the old feeling, and was his still. He was disconcerted by the calm compassion in her eyes.

“Eddy is as cold as a stone,” he said; “he is like his mother's people. He doesn't see why an old fellow like me should keep dragging on. He minds no more than Jarvis does—less, for I am Jarvis's living, and to keep me alive is the best thing for

him. But it would be better for Eddy, he thinks, if I were out of the way."

"Please do not speak so; I don't believe that any son really entertains such thoughts."

"Ah, that shows how little you know. You have not been in society all these years. Eddy is philosophical, and thinks that I have very little good of my life, which is true enough, and that he would have a great deal, which is quite as true."

"Even if it were so, he would not be his own master—at nineteen," Evelyn said.

"Twenty—he is the eldest. Of course he would be better off in that case. He would have more freedom, and a better allowance; and he would be of more importance, not the second but the first."

"Oh," she cried with horror, "do not impute such dreadful motives to your own child."

He shook his head, looking at her with an air of cynical wisdom—a look which made the countenance, so changed and faded with disease, almost diabolical to contemplate. Evelyn turned her eyes away with a movement of horrified impatience. And this was not at all the feeling with which Saumarez meant to inspire the woman who had once loved him. He was unwilling even now to believe that she had entirely escaped out of his power.

"Evelyn," he said, putting forth again that large nerveless hand, from the touch of which she shrank—"let me call you so, as in the old days. It can do no one any harm now."

"Surely not," she said; "it could do no one any harm."

He had not expected this reply; if she had shrank from the familiarity and refused her permission, he would have been better pleased. Helpless, paralytic, dreadful to behold, he would fain have considered himself a danger to her peace of mind still.

"I have to accept that," he said, "like all the rest. That it doesn't matter what I say, no man could be jealous of me. Evelyn!—I like to say the name—there's everything that's sweet and womanly in it. I wish I had called my little girl by that name. I thought of it, to tell the truth."

"Nothing could have been more unsuitable," cried Evelyn, with a flush of anger. "I hope you did not think of it, for that would have been an insult, not a compliment to me. Mr. Saumarez, I think I must go on. Madeline expected me at—"

"Oh, let Madeline wait a little! She has plenty of interests, and I have something very serious to say. You may think I am trying to lead you into recollections—which certainly would agitate me, if not you. You are very composed, Evelyn. I ought to be glad to see you so, but I don't know that I am. I remember everything so well—but you—seem to have passed into another world."

"It is true. The world is entirely changed for me. I can

scarcely believe that it was I who lived through so many experiences twenty-two years ago."

"I feel that there is a reproach in that—and yet if I could tell you everything—but you would not listen to me now."

"I am no longer interested," she said gently, "so many things have happened since then: my father's death, and Harry's. How thankful I was to be able to care for them both! All these things are between me and my girlhood. It has died out of my mind. If there is anything you want to say to me, Mr. Saumarez, I hope it is on another subject than that."

The attempt in his eyes to convey a look of sentiment made her feel faint. But fortunately his faculties were keen enough to show him the futility of that attempt. "Yes," he said, "it is another subject—a very different subject. I shall not live long, and I have no friends. I care for nobody, and you will say it is a natural consequence of this that nobody cares for me."

She made a movement of dissent in her great pity. "It cannot be so bad as that."

"But it *is*. My sister's dead, you know, and there is really nobody. Evelyn, I have a great favour to ask you. Will you be the guardian of my boy and girl?"

"The guardian—of your children!" She was so startled and astonished that she could only gaze at him, and could not find another word to say.

"Why should you be so much surprised? I never thought so much of any woman as I do of you. I find you again after so many years, unchanged. Evelyn, you are changed. I said so a little while ago: but yet you are yourself, and that's the best I know. I'd like my little Rosamond to be like you. I'd like Eddy, though he's a rascal, to know some one that would make even him good. Evelyn, they are well enough off, they would not be any trouble in that way. Will you take them—will you be their guardian when I am gone?"

Evelyn was not only astonished but frightened by what he asked of her. She rose up hastily. "You must not think of it—you must not think of it! What could I do for them? I have other duties of my own."

"It would not be so much trouble," he said, "only to give an eye to them now and then; to have them with you when you felt inclined to ask them—nothing more. For old friendship's sake you would not object to have my children on a visit once a year or so. I am sure you would not refuse me that?"

"But that is very different from being their guardian."

"It would not be, as I should arrange it. You would give them your advice when they wanted it. You would do as much as that for any one, for the gamekeeper's children, much more for an old friend's—and see them now and then, and inquire how they were getting on? I should ask nothing more. Evelyn, you wouldn't refuse an old friend, a disabled, unhappy solitary man like me?"

"Oh, Mr. Saumarez!" she cried. He had tried to raise himself up a little in the fervour of his appeal, but fell back again in a sort of heap, the exertion and the emotion being too much for his strength. The servant appeared in a moment from where he had been watching. "He oughtn't to be allowed to agitate himself, ma'am," said the man reproachfully. Evelyn, alarmed, walked humbly beside the chair till they came to the gate of the Park, terrified to think that perhaps he had injured himself, that perhaps she ought to humour him by consenting to anything. He was not allowed to say any more, nor did she add a word, but he put out his hand again and pressed hers feebly as they parted. "Can I do anything?" she had asked the servant in her compunction. "Nothing but leave him quite quiet," said the man. "It might be as much as his life is worth. I don't hold with letting 'em talk." Saumarez was one of a class, a mere case, to his attendant. And Evelyn felt as if she had been guilty of a kind of murder as she hurried away.

She found Lady Leighton waiting for her for lunch, and slightly disturbed by the delay. "I have a thousand things to do, and the loss of half-an-hour puts one all out," she said, with a little peevishness; "but I'm sure you had a reason, Evelyn, for being so late."

"A reason which was much against my will," said Evelyn, telling the story of her distress, to which her friend listened very gravely. "I should take care not to meet him again," said Lady Leighton, with a cloud on her brow. "You listen to him out of pure pity, but weak and ailing as he is, it would be sweet to his vanity to compromise a woman even now."

"I do not understand what you mean," said Evelyn; "he could not compromise me, if that is it, by anything he could do, were he all that he has ever been."

"You don't know what your husband might think," said her friend; "he wouldn't like it. He might have every confidence in you—but a man of Ned Saumarez's character, and an old lover, and all that—he might say——"

"My husband," said Mrs. Rowland, feeling the blood mount to her head, "has no such ideas in his mind. He neither knows anything about Mr. Saumarez's character, nor would he even if he did know. You mistake my feeling altogether. It is not anything about my husband that distresses me—it is the trust he wants me to undertake of his children."

"Oh, you may make yourself easy about that, Evelyn. That was only a blind. It is little he thinks about his children. He'll get you to meet him and to talk to him, professedly about them—oh, I don't doubt that! but that's not what he means. You don't know Ned Saumarez so well as I do," cried Lady Leighton, putting out her hand to stop an outcry of indignation; "you don't know the world so well as I do; you have been out of it for years, and you always were an innocent, and never did understand——"

"Understand! that a man who is dying by inches should have—such ideas. A man on the edge of the grave—with a servant, a nurse, looking after him as if he were a child."

"It's very sad, my dear, especially the last, which is incredible, I allow. How a man like that can think that a woman would—— But they do, all the same. You might be led yourself by pity, or perhaps by a little lingering feeling—or—well, well, I will not say that, I don't want to make you angry—perhaps by a little vanity then, if I may say such a word."

"Madeline, I think you know far too much of the world."

"Perhaps," said Lady Leighton, not without a little self-complacence. "I have had a great deal of experience in life."

"And too little," said Evelyn, "of honest meaning and truth."

"Oh, as for that! but if you think you will find truth or honest meaning, my dear, in Ned Saumarez, you will be very far wrong; and if he can lead you into a mess with your husband, or get you talked about——"

"He will never get me into a mess with my husband, you may be certain of that, Madeline."

"Oh, if you will take your own way, I cannot help it," cried Lady Leighton. "I have done all I can. And now come down to lunch. At all events we must not quarrel, you and I."

The lunch, however, was not a very successful one, and Evelyn refused to take any further action about Chester Street, and was so determined in her resistance that her friend at last gave up the argument, and with something very like the quarrel she had deprecated, allowed Mrs. Rowland to depart alone for her hotel, which she did in great fervour of indignation and distress. But as she walked quickly along the long line of the Park, she perceived with a pang of alarm and surprise, the invalid's chair being drawn across the end of the ride, into the same path where she had met Saumarez an hour or two before. Was it possible that Madeline could be right? Was he going back to wait for her there? She stood but for a moment and watched the slow mournful progress of the chair, the worn-out figure lying back in it, the ashen face amid the many wraps. A certain awe came over her. She had been long out of the world, and had never been very wise in such matters: and who could believe that a man in the last stage of life should be able to amuse himself by schemes at once so base and so frivolous? She turned back half-ashamed of herself for doing so, and went home another way. It might be, she said to herself with a compunction, that all he meant was after all what he thought his children's interest: then with a thrill of self-suspicion asked herself, was this the vanity by which Madeline, too clear sighted, had suggested she might be moved? Oh, clearly the world was not a place for her! The mere discussion of such possibilities abashed and shamed her. Her simple husband, who could not cope with these fine people, and upon whom probably they

would look down—her home, far from all such ignoble suggestions, her own difficulties, which might be troublesome enough, but not like these—how much better they were! Her heart had been a little caught by the aspect of the old life from which she had been separated so long, and she had begun to think that with all the advantages her new position gave her, it might be pleasant to resume those of the old one, and venture a little upon the sea of society, which looked so bright at the first glance. Had she yielded to this temptation no doubt the good Rowland would have followed her guidance, pleased with anything she suggested, delighted for a time with the fine company, giving up his chosen life for her sake. And it is very probable that, had Lady Leighton foreseen the disgust with which her warning would fill her friend's mind, she would have been chary about giving it, and would have preferred to let Evelyn take her chance of compromise and danger. The worst of society is, that it deadens the mind to the base and vile, taking away all horror of things unclean, by inculcating a perpetual suspicion of their existence. But no such deadening influence had ever been in Evelyn's mind. She sent another letter to her husband by that afternoon's post, which, in the midst of various tribulations of his own, made that good man's heart leap. She told him that she had changed her mind about staying in London, that it was odious to her: that she counted the hours till he should return, that she longed for Rosmore, and to see the Clyde and the lochs, and the children, and "our own home." James Rowland, though he was not a sentimental man, kissed this letter; for he was in great need of consolation, having in full measure his own troubles too.

## CHAPTER VIII

EVELYN scarcely went out at all next day. She paid a visit to some of the old furniture shops in the morning, which was a direction quite different from that in which she would be subjected to any painful meeting—and realized once more her husband's simple maxim that there was great diversion in buying. She did buy within a certain range, expensive articles—things which she knew Madeline Leighton would covet but could not afford, with a kind of pleasure in the unnecessary extravagance which she was half ashamed of, half amused by when she realized it. The old marqueterie was solid and beautifully made, and had borne the brunt of years of usage; it was not a hollow fiction like the fabric of society which Lady Leighton and such as she expounded as unutterably vile, yet clung to as if it were the only thing true. Evelyn declared to herself that she would have no house in Chester Street. To

cover up the old faded carpets with pretty Persian rugs, and make the dingy rooms fine with temporary fittings up which did not belong to them, was, like all the rest, a deception and disgust. The pretty things should be for her own house, where they would be placed to remain as long as she lived, where they would be like herself, at home. But except the time she spent in these shops, which was not very long, she did not go out all day. And she had, it must be allowed, got very tired of her own company, when in the afternoon the door was opened suddenly, and a servant appeared to announce some one, a young lady, about whose name he was very doubtful, for Mrs. Rowland. He was followed into the room by the slim figure of a girl looking very young but very self-possessed and unabashed, with an ease of manner which Evelyn was not accustomed to see in her kind. This young lady was dressed very simply, as girls who are not "out" (as well as many who are) are specially supposed to be. The gray frock was spotless, and beautifully made, but it was absolutely unadorned, and she had not an ornament or a ribbon about her to break the severe grace of her outline. But to make amends for this, she had the radiant complexion which is so often seen in English girls—a complexion not yet put in jeopardy either by hot rooms and late hours, or by the experiences of Ascot and Goodwood and Hurlingham; her hair was very light, not the conventional gold. She came forward to Evelyn with the air of a perfect little woman of the world. "I am Rosamond Saumarez," she said, holding out her hand; "my father told me I was to come to see you." Evelyn stumbled up to her feet with a startled sensation, bewildered by a visit so absolutely unexpected. The young lady took her extended hand, and shook it affably, then with a little air of begging Mrs. Rowland to be seated, like a young princess, drew forth for herself a low chair.

"He said I need not explain who I was, for that you would know."

"Yes," said Evelyn, "you must forgive me for being a little confused."

"Oh, I dare say you were having a little doze. It is so warm; and don't you find the noise soothing? There is never any break in it: it goes on and on, and puts one to sleep."

"I don't find it has that quality," said Evelyn, half affronted to have it supposed that she was dozing. "It is strange for me," she said, "to meet your father's children. I knew him only as a young man."

"Oh yes, I know," said the young lady, nodding her head with an air of knowing all about it, which confused Evelyn still more.

"He told me he had two children, I think. Are you the eldest?" she asked almost timidly.

"Oh no, Eddy is the eldest: but I'm the most serious. I have got the sense of the family, everybody says. Eddy is with a

crammer trying hard to pass the army examination ; but he never will : he hates books, and is very fond of his fun. That may be natural, but you will agree that it is not very good for getting on in life."

"I suppose not," said Evelyn.

"No, certainly ; and so much is thought of doing something nowadays. I suppose father was not very much in the way of working when you knew him, Mrs. Rowland : and yet he is as hard upon Eddy as if he had done nothing but what was good all his life."

"Your father is a very great sufferer, I fear," said Evelyn, who had entirely lost her presence of mind, and did not know what to say.

"Oh no, not so much as you would think. Of course he's very helpless : Jarvis has to do everything for him. But I don't think he really minds—not so much as people would think. He likes to be pitied and sympathized with, and to look interesting. Poor father ! he thinks he looks interesting ; but perhaps you thought it went too far for that. Some people are quite afraid of him as if he might die on their hands."

"Oh no," cried Evelyn, faltering ; "nobody would be so cruel ; but it must be very terrible for you."

"Well," said Miss Saumarez, "we have been used to it a long time, it looks quite natural to us. But some people are frightened. It isn't a thing, however, that kills, I believe. It may go on for years and years."

"And you"—Evelyn felt that it was almost an irreverence to talk to this young lady as to a school-girl, but still it was to be supposed she was one—"you are still in the school-room, busy with lessons yet ?"

"I don't think I have ever been much in the school-room," said the girl. "It has been rather difficult to manage my education. Father liked to have me at home when I was a little thing. I used to make him laugh. We tried several governesses, but they were not very successful ; either they preferred to take care of *him* or they quarrelled with me. I don't think I was a very nice child," said Miss Rosamond impartially. "It wasn't a good school, was it, to have all kinds of pettings and bon-bons because I was funny and could make him laugh, and then turned out, as if I had been a little dog, when he was cross ?"

"My dear !" said Evelyn, dismayed.

"Oh, I am afraid you think me *awful*," said Rosamond, "but really it is all quite true."

"It is a long time since I was a girl like you," said Mrs. Rowland, "and we were not allowed to be so frank and speak our mind ; that is the chief difference, I suppose."

"Oh, I have always heard from all the old ladies that I am dreadful. But certainly the thing we do nowadays is to speak our mind—rather a little more than less, don't you know. We

don't carry any false colours, or pretend to pretty feelings, like the girls in the story-books. What humbugs you must have been in your time!"

"I don't think we were humbugs," said Evelyn. She was beginning to be amused by this frank young person, who made her feel so young and inexperienced. It was Evelyn who was the little girl, and Rosamond the sage, acquainted with the world and life.

"Father says so; but then, he thinks all people are humbugs. He says we really can think of no one but ourselves, whatever we may pretend."

"But you mustn't believe in that," said Evelyn. "It is a dreadful way of looking at the world. Nobody can tell how much kindness and goodness there is unless they have been in circumstances to try it, which I have. You must not enter upon life with that idea, for it is quite false."

"What! when father says so? Oughtn't I to believe that he knows best?"

"Oh, when your father says so!" said Evelyn, startled. "My dear, I don't think your father can mean it. He may say it—in jest—"

"Oh, don't be afraid, Mrs. Rowland," cried the girl, cheerfully. "I don't take everything he says for gospel. He's a disappointed man, you know. He never got exactly what he wanted. Mother and he did not get on, I am told: and there is every appearance that Eddy will be a handful, as I suppose father was himself in his day. And then he's paralyzed. That should be set against a lot, shouldn't it? I always say so to myself when he is nasty to me."

"I am very glad that you do," said Evelyn, with tears in her eyes. "It should indeed stand against a great deal. And as you grow older you will understand better how such dreadful helplessness affects the mind—"

"Oh," cried Rosamond, breaking in, "if you think there's any softening of the brain or that sort of thing, you are very very much mistaken. If you only knew how clever he is! I have heard him take in people—people, you know, like my uncle the bishop, and that sort of person, with an account of pious feelings, and how he knows it is all for his good, and so forth. You would think he was a saint to hear him—and the poor bishop looking so bothered, knowing too much to *quite* believe it, and yet not daring to contradict him. It was as good as a play. I shrieked with laughter when he was gone, and so did father. It was the funniest thing I ever saw."

"My dear!" cried Evelyn again, wringing her hands in protestation; but what could she say? If she had been disposed to take in hand the reformation of Edward Saumarez's daughter, it could not be by addling to her unerring clear sight and criticism of him. "Do you see much," she said, in a kind of desperation, "of the bishop?" with a clutch at the moral skirts of some one who might be able to help.

"Oh no, only when he comes to town. They don't ask us now to the Palace, for I am sure he never can make up his mind about father, whether he is a real saint or—the other thing. Aunt Rose is the relation, you know, not the bishop. It is by mother's side, so they naturally disapprove of papa."

Evelyn did not at all know how to deal with this girl, who was so cognisant of the world and all its ways. Rosamond was even more a woman of the world than Madeline Leighton. She believed in less, and she seemed to know more, and her calm girlish voice, and the pearly tints of her infantine radiance of countenance produced upon the middle-aged listener a sensation of utter confusion impossible to describe. She asked hurriedly, with an endeavour to divert the easy stream of words to another subject, "Have you any friends of your own age, my dear, to amuse yourself with?"

"Oh plenty," said Rosamond, "quantities! There are such crowds of girls; wherever one goes, nothing but women, women, till one is sick of them. I have a very great friend whom I see constantly, and who is exactly of my way of thinking. As soon as we are old enough we both mean to take up a profession. I have not quite decided upon mine, but she means to be a doctor. She is studying a little now, whenever she can get a moment, and looking forward to the time when she shall be old enough to put down her foot. Of course they will try to forbid it, and that sort of thing. But she has quite made up her mind. As for me, I have not such a clear leading as Madeline. I am still quite in doubt."

"Madeline," said Evelyn. "I wonder if by chance that is Madeline Leighton whom I saw the other day?"

Miss Saumarez nodded her head. "But you must promise," she said, "not to betray us to her mother. Of course we quite allow that we are too young to settle upon anything now. She is only seventeen. I am nearly two years older, but then, unfortunately, I have not the same clear vocation. And of course something must be allowed for natural hindrances, as long as father lives."

"I hope you will never leave him," said Evelyn warmly. "It is true I am old-fashioned, and do not understand a girl with a profession; but everybody must see that in your case your duty lies at home."

"If anybody who was a very good match wanted to marry me," said the girl with a laugh, "would you then think that my duty lay at home?"

Evelyn felt herself reduced to absolute imbecility by this bewildering question. "My dear—my dear—you know a great deal too much; you are too wise," she said.

"But that's not an answer," said Rosamond; "you see the logic of it, and you daren't give me an answer. You just beg the question. I must go away now; but father told me I was to ask you if I might come again."

"If you care to come to such an old-world, old-fashioned, puzzled person as I am," said Evelyn, with a troubled smile.

"I should like it, if I may. Father says you are the real good, and a great many people I know only pretend. I should like to know better what the real good was like, so I will come again to-morrow, if I may."

"Come, but not because I am the real good. I am a very puzzled person, and you who are only a little girl seem to know a great deal more than I."

Rosamond smiled, for the first time, a bright and childlike smile. She had smiled and even laughed in the course of her prelections as the same required it. But for the first time her face lighted up. "Oh, perhaps you will find there is not so much in me as you think," she said, giving her hand to the middle-aged and much-perplexed person before her, after the fashion of the time. I forget what the fashion of the time was in those days. People had not begun at that period to shake their friends' hands high into the air as if they were grasping a pump handle. Evelyn stood and looked after her aghast, not capable of sitting down or changing out of that pose while the girl went away. She crept out, half ashamed of doing so, into the balcony, to watch her as she appeared in the crowded road outside : and after a moment, Rosamond came forth, accompanied by a large mastiff, who performed several gambols of joy about her as she stepped out into the stream of people. Evelyn watched her going along, keeping, so to speak, the crown of the causeway, she and her dog giving place to no one. She was on her right side of the pavement, and to be hustled out of her course was an impossibility. Her strong, confident step, her half masculine dress, jacket and hat like those of a youth, were wonderful and terrible to the woman who had never moved anywhere without an attendant. She stared after this wonderful young creature with a bewilderment which almost took from her the power of thought.

Later in the day Lady Leighton came in, penitentially, and in a softened mood. "I was very silly to frighten you," she said ; "I can't think what made me such a fool. I forgot that you were you, and not any one else. I was right enough so far as ordinary society goes, only not right in respect to Evelyn Ferrars."

"Evelyn Rowland, doubly removed from your traps and snares of society," said Evelyn with a smile.

"Well—be it so ;—but I hope you are not really going to give up that delightful plan about the Chester Street house, because I was silly and spoke unadvisedly with my lips. If punishment were to come upon a woman for every time she did that—"

"No great punishment," said Evelyn. "You will come and see me in my own house, and that will be better than seeing me at Chester Street—or not seeing me—you who have never a moment to yourself."

"That is true. I never have a moment to myself," said Lady Leighton. "I am going off now to St. Roque's to see about getting Mr. Pincem, the great surgeon, to look very specially after a favourite patient of mine : and then I must come back to Grosvenor Place to a drawing-room meeting : and then—but I can sandwich you in between the two, Evelyn, if you want to go over any of those houses again."

"I don't want to go over any of them again, thanks. I was quite satisfied with Chester Street if I had wanted any. Perhaps, however, I ought to let the people know."

"Oh, never mind the people," said Lady Leighton. "if you actually mean to give it up and throw me over ; for it is me you ought to think of. And why ? because I told you that Ned Saumarez, though he is paralyzed, was as great a flirt as ever—"

"Don't let us have it all over again," said Evelyn. "I take no interest in it. By the way, I have just had a strange visitor—his daughter, Madeline. She tells me that your daughter is her dearest friend."

"His daughter ? Oh, Rosamond ! yes, she and Maddy run about everywhere together, and plot all manner of things."

"Are you not afraid of their plottings, two wild girls together?"

"I afraid ! oh dear, not I ; they will probably both marry before they have time to do any mischief. That puts all nonsense out of their head. I know ! they are going to walk the hospitals, and heaven knows what ; relieve the poor and also see life. I never contradict them—what is the use ? Somebody will turn up in their first or second season with enough of money and sufficiently presentable. And they will be married off, and become like other people, and we shall hear of their vagaries no more."

"They will then have every moment occupied, and more things to do than hours to do them in, Madeline, like you."

"Precisely like me," said the woman of the world ; "and an excellent good thing too, Evelyn, if you would allow yourself to see it. Do you think it would be so good for me if I had more time to think ? My dear, you know many things a great deal better than I do, but you don't know the world. There are as many worries in a day in London as there are in a year out of it. That is, I mean there are in society, both in London and the country, annoyances such as you people in your tranquillity never can understand. I am not without my troubles, though I don't wear them on my sleeve. I do what is far better. I am so busy, I have not time to think of them. There are troubles about money, troubles about the boys, troubles about—well, Leighton is not always a model husband, my dear, like yours. And it will be well for the girls if they do as I do, and don't leave themselves too much time to think."

"They seem," said Evelyn, glad to turn the seriousness of this speech aside, and not to seem curious (though she was) about her friend's troubles, "to exercise the privilege of thinking very

freely at their present stage. But this poor girl has no mother, and no doubt she has been left a great deal to herself."

"I know you don't mean that for a hit at me," said her friend ; "though you may perhaps think a woman with so much to do must neglect her children. Madeline is every bit as bad as Rosamond, my dear. They mean no harm either of them. They want, poor darlings, to work for their living and to see life. It is a pity their brothers don't share their youthful fancies. The boys prefer to do nothing, and the kind of life they see is not very desirable. But by the blessing of Providence nothing very dreadfully bad comes of it either way. The girls find that they have to marry and settle down, like their mothers before them ; and the boys—well, the boys ! oh, they come out of it somehow at the end."

And to the great amazement of Evelyn, this woman of the world, this busy idler and frivolous fine lady suddenly fell into a low outburst of crying, as involuntary as it was unexpected, saying, amid her tears : "Oh, please God, please God, they will all come through at the end !"

Mrs. Rowland was a woman who had known a great deal of trouble, but when she was thus the witness of her friend's unsuspected pain, she said to herself that she was an ignorant woman and knew nothing. She had not believed there was anything serious at all, not to say anguish and martyrdom, in Madeline Leighton's life. She held her friend in her arms for a moment, and they kissed each other ; but Evelyn did not ask any question. Perhaps Lady Leighton thought she had told her everything, perhaps she had that instinctive sense that everybody must know, which belongs to the class who are accustomed to have their movements chronicled, and all they do known. For she offered no explanation, but only said, as she raised her head from Evelyn's shoulder and dried her eyes, with a little tremulous laugh in which the tears still lingered, "I am as sure of that as I am that I live. If we didn't think so, half of us would die."

Not two minutes after this she returned to the charge again about the house in Chester Street. "Will you really not think of it again, Evelyn ? It would be such a pleasure to have you near : and, my dear, I should never say a word about any Platonic diversion that amused you. On the contrary, I'd flirt with Mr. Rowland and keep him off the scent.—Oh, let me laugh : I must laugh after I have cried. Well, if you have decided, I don't mind saying that you are quite as well out of Ned Saumarez's way. Sending the girl to see you was a very serious step. And he is a man that will stick at nothing. Perhaps it is all the better that you are going away."

"That is the strongest argument you could use," said Evelyn, "to keep me here."

"Perhaps that was what I intended," said Lady Leighton ; "but, dear, how late it is, I must go——" She had reached the

door when she suddenly turned back. "What time did you fix for our visit to you, Evelyn? I must work it into our list. Without organization one could never go anywhere at all. It must be between the end of October and the middle of December. Would the 10th November to the 20th suit you? or is that too long. One must be perfectly frank about these matters, or one never could go on at all."

"It must be when you please, and for as long as you please, dear Madeline," said Mrs. Rowland. She added, "I fear, you know, it will be rather dull. I don't know whether there is any society, and James—"

"I will put it down 10th to 15th," said Lady Leighton, seriously noting this consideration. And then she gave her friend a hasty embrace, and hurried away.

How strange it all was! Evelyn felt as if she had peeped through some crevice behind the lively bustling stage, and suddenly seen what was going on behind the scenes. There had been little behind the scenes in her own life. It had been sad, but it had all been open as the day. And now, when she stood at the beginning of a new life, she had nothing to wound, nothing to make her reluctant that any word should leap to light, even that story of hers which had been so near tragedy, of which Edward Saumarez had been the hero. She almost blushed at the importance she had given that story, now that she had seen again the man who had been the hero of it. It seemed to lose all the dignity and tragic meaning which had been the chief thing in her life for so long.

While Evelyn was thinking this, a letter was put into her hand, in which her husband bade her do exactly as she pleased about the Chester Street house. "If you like to stay there for a little, my dear, and see your old friends, I shall like that best; and if you prefer to come home with me at once, and take possession of Rosmore, that is what I shall like best. It is for you to choose: and in the meantime I am coming back to town, to do whatever you like to-morrow night."

To-morrow of the day on which the letter was written meant that very day upon which Evelyn received it. She had not pretended to be in love with her good middle-aged husband, she, a subdued middle-aged woman. But what a haven of quiet, and plain honest understanding, and simple truth and right she seemed to float into when she realized that he was coming back to her to-night.

## CHAPTER IX

JAMES ROWLAND left his wife in London with a certain satisfaction which was very unlike the great affection he had for her, and the delight which day by day he had learned more and more to take in her society. He was a man full of intelligence and quickness of mind notwithstanding various roughnesses of manner ; and he never had known before what it was to have such a companion ; a woman who understood almost all he meant, and meant a good deal which he was delightfully learning to understand : bringing illustrations to their life which his imperfect education had kept from him, and making him aware of a hundred new sources of satisfaction and pleasure. But his very admiration for Evelyn had deepened in his mind the first stab of anxiety which her hand had involuntarily given. He had never got over the shock of finding out that his children, instead of being the little things he had invariably gone on thinking them to be, had reached the age of early manhood and womanhood, and that he knew nothing whatever about them. He had tried at first to laugh at this as a simple evidence of his own folly, but the little puncture of that first wound had gone on deepening and deepening. He felt it only in occasional thrills at first, when it had given him about as much annoyance as a stray pang of rheumatism ; but as he travelled home, every day's nearer approach made the ache a little keener. It was the only thing in his experience of which he had said nothing to Evelyn—although from the day of their arrival in London it had begun to gnaw him like the proverbial fox under his mantle. He grew restless, unable to settle to anything, continually wondering what they would be like, how they would receive him, if they would be a credit to him or the reverse, how Evelyn would receive them, and how they would take to Evelyn. Their stiff little letters about his marriage, which were almost the first letters of theirs which he had read with any attention, had been received at Suez on the way home. And they had redoubled his anxiety and his restlessness. He did not show them to Evelyn, which was very significant of their unsatisfactory character to himself. Had they been "nice" letters, he would have been too anxious to place them in her hands, to see her face light up with interest. But they were not, alas, nice letters. They were very stiff formal productions. They acknowledged that their father had a right to please himself, and that they had no claim to be taken into consideration. "What we expected was different, but it is you, as Aunt Jean says, that are the master, and we hope that your lady will not look down upon us, or keep us away from you." This was not the sort of thing which he could show to Evelyn, anxious as she was to do everything a mother could do for his children. And

all this made him very restless : he wanted to escape from her, to go and inspect them before she saw them, to try even, if that were possible, to lick them into shape before they came under her eyes. He had not been afraid of the venture of his new marriage, nor of the perils by land and sea to which he was continually exposed ; but he was very much afraid of the effect of the boy and girl whom he felt himself to have neglected, and who were now rising up as giants in his path. In these circumstances Rowland snatched anxiously at the pretext of going to see Rosmore and prepare it for his wife's reception. What he really wanted was to see the children and decide what could be done to prepare them.

It was consequently with a sense of escape that he waved his hand to Evelyn from the carriage window, thinking, with a touch of pride, what a lady she looked, in her plain dress, standing there upon the platform to see him off, among the crowd, not one of whom was like her. He was very proud of his wife. He thought she looked like a princess standing there so simple, with no outward sign to show what she was, but a look, to which any one would bow down. But, as the train rushed away into distance, and the long lines of the houses and streets flew past, James Rowland laid himself back, and thanked Heaven that he had escaped, that he had found a pretence to get away, and that he would thus be able to see the worst for himself. Dwelling upon this view of the subject so long had made him scarcely conscious of any pleasure in the anticipation of meeting his children. Had he not been married, had he come back without any special direction of his thoughts towards them, he would no doubt have looked forward with a certain pleasure to meeting his two little things, and perhaps the disenchantment of finding them grown up would have amused him, and paternal feeling excused the imperfections which he now so much feared to find. It never, however, could have pleased Rowland to find in his son a half-educated lout, or in his daughter a pert little girl, on the original level of the foundry, which was the haunting fear in his mind now ; so that in any case a great disappointment would in all probability have awaited him. His apprehensions became stronger and stronger as he approached the end of his journey, when they would be proved right or wrong. He recalled to himself what the aunt had been, whom in his foolishness he had been so glad to confide them to, as one who would cherish them as if they were her own :—a rosy-cheeked, cheerful lass, with a jest for any lad who addressed her ; perfectly modest and good, but with the freedom of the overflowing young community, which above all things loved its fun—not equal to his Mary, who had always showed a little shrinking from the fun, and never kept company with any one but with him alone. Jean appeared very clearly before him as he searched the memories of his youth—a trig, comely, clever lass, full of health and spirits. She would be, no doubt,

buxom now, terribly well off by means of the lavish cheques he had sent, and his daughter would be much as she had been. Oh, she had been a good steady lass, there had been nothing to find fault with ; but to think of a daughter like Jean filled the good man with horror. What could he do with her ? What could Evelyn do with her ? Cold beads of perspiration came out on his forehead. And then the lout of a boy ! This was how he had got to think of them who ought to have been the stars of his horizon. And it would not be their fault, it would be his fault. He was thankful to the bottom of his heart that he would see them first, and get the shock over, and have time to think how it could be broken to Evelyn. But he was not the less afraid of the first sight of them, afraid of proving all his prognostications true.

He had not warned his sister-in-law of his arrival, and it was again an escape to him to postpone the meeting till next day, and in the meantime to go to the best hotel he could find. This was many years ago, and I don't know what may be the case now : but then the hotels in Glasgow were not very excellent, that great city being, I suppose, too much occupied with its manifold businesses to make preparation for tourists and idle visitors as Edinburgh does ; and Mr. Rowland did not find himself in the lap of luxury to which that masterful rich man was accustomed. This probably discouraged him still more, for it must be said that next morning, instead of going to see his children, he took an early train and went down to Rosmore, thus putting off for another day the possibility of ascertaining definitely what there was to fear. He was conscious that it was a cowardly thing to do : and it was an unnatural thing—heartless, even, some people might say ; but then his terrors for the moment had taken the place of his merely instinctive and quite undeveloped paternal love.

Rosmore was not disappointing, that was certain ! He took a steamer from the opposite side of the Clyde, in order that he might see it first, as he had been used to do when he was a young man, and all such advancement seemed as far above him as the throne. His heart beat as the rustling, bustling, crowded steamboat came to the spot where the white colonnade had always been visible among the noble groups of trees, which withdrew a little just there, and stood about in clumps and gatherings to let the view be seen. There it stood upon its green knoll unchanged, the sloping greensward stretching down towards the salt, dazzling water, the windows caught and shining out in the sun. It was by good fortune—which everybody knows is not invariable in these regions—a beautiful day, and to Rowland it seemed paradise to see the heavy clouds of the foliage open, and the white pillars come in view. He landed upon the side of the peninsula, where a little salt water loch runs up into the bosom of the hills. It is characteristic of a Scot in all countries that he never sees a landscape which does

not remind him, to its own disadvantage, of some landscape at home. But Rowland, who had been a great deal about the world, went a step further and declared to himself that he had never seen anything to equal that "silver streak" of sea-water, with the noble line of mountains stretching across the upper end. They were beautiful in themselves, their outlines as grand against the sky and intense sunshine as if they had been as lofty as the Himalayas ; but this was only half their fascination. It was the capricious Northern lights and shadows that made them so delightful, so unlike anything but themselves. In the East the sunshine drags and becomes tedious : it goes on blazing all day-long without change. But the North is dramatic, individual, full of vicissitude, making a new combination every minute, never for half an hour the same. He stood and watched the clouds flying over the hills, like the breath of some spell-bound giant, now one point and now another coming into light ; and the little waves dancing, and the soft banks reflected like another enchanted country under the surface of the water. The sight uplifted in his bosom the heart of the homely man who had no raptures to express, but felt the beauty to the depths of his being. "I've travelled far, but I never saw anything like it," he said to the agent, who had met him on the little pier, and who backed him up with enthusiasm, partly because he was of the district too, and prone to believe that there was nothing equal to Rosmore in the world, and partly because he was a good man of business, and liked to see a wealthy tenant in such a good frame of mind.

But it would be difficult to describe the emotions of James Rowland as he walked through the beautiful woods and entered the house. He had never been in the house before. Naturally, at the time when he first conceived his passion for it, the young foundry man, however clever, could never have had any means of entering into such a place ; and to tell the truth, he did not much know what was required by a family of condition in an English or rather Scotch house. He knew the luxury of the East, and how to make a bungalow comfortable, but the arrangements of a mansion at home were strange to him.

He followed the agent accordingly with a little awe, which he carefully concealed, through the suites of rooms, libraries, morning rooms, boudoirs, all sorts of lavish accommodation, with the uses of which he was practically unacquainted. But he did not betray his ignorance. On the contrary he was very critical, finding out the defects in the old-fashioned furniture as if he had been accustomed to such things all his life.

"This looks as old as Methuselah," he said. "Why, the things must be mouldy. I should think they can't have been touched for a hundred years."

"More than that," said the agent, "and that's just why the ladies like it. It is called Countess Jean's boudoir. Everything

is just as it was when she came home a bride. The ladies will not have it touched."

"Oh, I know that decayed style is the fashion," said Mr. Rowland without winking an eyelid : "but you can't imagine we will put up with these old hangings? You must have them cleared away."

"We'll do that, if it's your desire ; but the hangings are real tapestry—the oldest in Scotland. The Earl will be just delighted to have them back."

"Now I look at them," said Rowland, "I believe my wife will like them. For my part I like fresh colours and rich stuffs. I like to have bright things about me. I find it all a little dingy, Mr. Campbell. You must put your best foot forward and have it put in complete order. And a great many other things will be wanted. We have got a boat-load," said the engineer with exhilaration, "of Indian toys and stuff. My wife's fond of all that sort of thing. We have curios enough to set up a shop."

"Ah," said the agent respectfully, "you have had unusual opportunities, Mr. Rowland : and ladies are so fond of picking things up."

"Yes," said Rowland, "my wife has wonderful taste—she knows a good thing when she sees it."

"Which is very far from being a general quality," said the appreciative agent. "Mrs. Rowland, I make no doubt, will turn Rosmore into a beautiful place."

"It is a beautiful place to begin with," said the new tenant ; "and it would be a strange place that would not be improved when my wife got it into her hands," he added with a glow of pride. He wanted much to confide to the agent that she was a lady of one of the best English families, and full of every accomplishment ; but his better sense restrained him.

What exultation he felt in his bosom as he stood under the white colonnade and gazed at the great Clyde rushing upon the beach at the foot of the knoll, and the steamer crossing (which it did by the influence of some good fairy just at this moment) the shining surface, and all the specks of passengers turning in one direction to catch that glimpse of Rosmore. So many times had he gazed at it so—and now for the first time, in the other sense, here he was looking down upon the landscape from his own door. It was not the satisfied appetite of acquisition—it was something finer and more ethereal—a youthful ideal and boyish sentiment carried through a whole life. He had dreamed of this long before there had been any conscious aim at all in his mind ; and now he had actually attained the thing which had so pleased his boyish thoughts. James Rowland took off his hat as he stood under the white colonnade. The agent thought he was saluting somebody in the passing steamer, and murmured, "They'll not see you ; it's farther off than it looks ;" but Rowland was saluting One who always sees, and who does not so often as ought to be receive thanks thus warm and glow-

ing from a grateful heart. "And for Evelyn too, who is the best of all!" he said within himself.

The agent gleaned enough to perceive that Mr. Rowland was exceedingly proud of his wife, and formed an exaggerated, and consequently rather unfavourable opinion of this unknown lady. He thought she must be a *connaisseuse* with her boat load of curiosities, which indeed, to tell the truth, were things that Rowland had "picked up" himself in many advantageous ways, before he had even seen his wife, and which Evelyn was not acquainted with at all. Mr. Campbell thought she must be a fantastic woman, and would, as he said, transmogrify the good honest old house, and turn it into a curiosity shop, or "chiney" warehouse—which was an idea he did not contemplate with pleasure. However, this was no reason why he should undervalue so rich and so easily pleased a tenant. He made the most ample promises as to what should be done, and the expedition with which everything should be accomplished—and accompanied Rowland to the boat, introducing him to the minister and to various local authorities on the way. "This is Mr. Rowland that has taken Rosmore. Ye'll likely see a great deal of him, for he means to make his principal residence here.—It's the great Rowland, the Indian engineer and railway man," he said aside, but not quite inaudibly, in each new-comer's ear.

The local potentates looked with admiration and interest at the new-comer. Any possible inmate of Rosmore would have been interesting to the minister, who had not much society in the parish, and had a natural confidence in the social qualities of a man who was so rich. The "merchant" who had long dreant of a railway up the side of the loch, which would bring Glasgow excursionists in their thousands to Rosmore, gazed with awe on the new inhabitant who had but to look upon a country destitute of means of locomotion, and lo, the iron way was there. Other points of interest abounded in the new inhabitant. He would quicken life in the parish in every way: probably his very name would secure that second delivery of letters for which the whole peninsula had been agitating so long. The steamboat would certainly call summer and winter at the pier, now that the House would be occupied and visitors always coming and going; and the decoration of the church, which was so much wanted, would, the minister thought, be secured now that such a wealthy inhabitant had been added to the resources of the parish. They all gave him a welcome which was as flattering as if he had been a royal prince. "It's been a distress to us a' to see the House standing empty so long, and I'm very glad to make Mr. Rowland's acquaintance. It will be good for us a' to have a man like him among us." How did they know what manner of man he was, except that he was rich? But James Rowland did not ask himself that question. In his present mood he was very ready to believe that, as he was delighted to come, so his new neighbours would be delighted to have him

there ; and he knew as well as they did that it would be a good thing for them to have a rich and liberal new parishioner at hand. He liked the looks of the minister, and the schoolmaster, and the merchant, and he was pleased that they should like him. He walked down to the pier attended by a little train ; and it was quite a feather in the cap of Mr. Foggo of Pitarrow, one of the smaller heritors of the parish, that he happened to be going across to the other side, and would consequently travel with the great man. "I'll talk to him about the kirk and see what he's willing to give," said this gentleman, exhilarated by the thought that a good subscription from the new-comer would save a good deal of money to the heritors. "But only don't be hasty ; don't be rash ; don't let him think that his siller is the first thing we are thinking of," said the minister. "Gangrel body ! what would we be thinking of *but* his siller," said the laird. But this, which wasthe onlything that was not complimentary, was not said aloud.

Thus Rowland was escorted to the boat, the frequent messenger between that solitude and the busy world, while Pitarrow followed, giving way to him as if he had been the Earl himself. The boat already felt as if it partially belonged to him, the crew, too, being all interested and impressed. He looked back from the deck upon the line of the Rosmore woods, and the profile of the house, which showed itself through them, a different view yet a delightful one : and listened with affability while the different places on the loch were pointed out to him. The evening was perfect as the day had been. The light had died off the deep waters of the loch, though it still played upon the hills, and its low rays struck full in the eyes, so to speak, of the white colonnade, bathing the house in a dazzle of light. What a place to come home to, to settle down in, to see from afar as he approached, and recognize as his own ! He figured to himself returning from an absence, hastening through the woods, received by Evelyn at the door. What a beautiful dream to be fulfilled at last ! What a refuge from all the labours and the tumults of life ! He listened vaguely to what Pitarrow was saying, and granted cordially that it would henceforward be his duty to come to the aid of the parish and to help to beautify the church, and would have given him a cheque on the spot, had there been pen and ink handy. But of course he had not taken his cheque-book with him upon that day's excursion, important as it was.

He got to the railway in this blissful state of mind, uplifted, his feet scarcely touching the ground. And then all at once his face grew sad and set. The light went out of it and a blank came in place of the animated and lively expression. He had done all that he wanted to do for the moment at Rosmore. Now another duty awaited him, a duty he should have turned to first, which was indeed the most important duty of all. Now there was no longer any escape for him : he must see his children, and that without any further delay.

## CHAPTER X

NEXT morning James Rowland woke with the churning of the waves under the little Clyde steamboat in his ears, as if he were again on the deck waiting for the opening in the trees, and the sight of the white colonnade on the summit of its knoll, which brought with it the dazzle of the sunshine, the purity of the sweet fresh air, the twitter of the birds. How pleasant to have such a vision at waking, to realize with delight that all those pleasant things were henceforth to be the everyday circumstances of his life! But the next moment a cloud came over his face, for he recollects what it was that must be his occupation to-day. No shirking it any longer—no possibility of persuading himself that something else ought to be done first. That had been possible the first day : to see that their future home was comfortable—to make sure that it would be ready for them, surely that was a duty? But now he had accomplished it, and knew all about the house, there was nothing further to keep him back. I hope the reader will not think this perplexed father unnatural or unkind. As a matter of fact, he would have been, and probably would be, after this first obstacle was got over, the kindest, the most fond of fathers. It was the consciousness of the great gulf between what, when he last saw his children, would have been right and natural for them, and what would be suitable and indeed necessary now—between what he himself was then, and what he was now, that overwhelmed him. They might be, in their hearts, everything the prudent father could desire, and yet be quite out of place at Rosmore, where he himself, if a little unpolished, would nevertheless be quite in his proper place. If they had been but the little children he remembered, who could have been trained into anything! Alas, these possibilities were all over. He dressed himself slowly, sighing from time to time, with an oppression on his heart that he could not account for, wishing now, after all, that Evelyn had been with him, who perhaps would have known better how to deal with the emergency. And he breakfasted very slowly, reading the *Herald* in detail, and brooding over the paragraphs of local news which he did not understand after so many years of separation from Glasgow and its interests. At last the moment came when he could delay no longer. He had read the papers ; he had finished his breakfast : he rose with a sigh and took his hat.

There is a street in Glasgow which I remember long ago, and which was then called the Sauchiehall Road. Something picturesque in the name has kept a place in the recollection of a child, over—let us not imagine how many years ; but it may be that a recollection so far off has confused the outlines of the street, or that in this age of change it may be completely altered,

perhaps overrun with tall tenements, perhaps fallen into irre-mediable decay. In like manner I am not sure that it was the Sauchiehall Road in which the young Rowlands lived with their aunt, though I think it was ; and the reader may here excuse the possibility of topographical error. It was a street in which there were many, according to a description exclusively and characteristically Scotch, "self-contained" houses of a small description, such as are not very usual in Scotland. So far as I remember, they were of a generally grimy kind, built in that dark complexioned stone which adds so much gloom to the often cloudy skies and damp atmosphere of the western city. These houses presented an aspect of faded gentility, and of having seen better days. But they were at the same time very attractive to people without any pretence at gentility, to whom the dignity of a front door and a house self-contained, in distinction to the more usual circumstances of a flat, was very tempting.

It was in one of these houses that Mrs. Brown, who was Rowland's sister-in-law, had established herself with her charges. It was one that was supposed to be among the best of the long row. It had a yard or two of what was called garden in front, almost filled with an elder-berry tree, on which there were some dusty indications of coming blossom ; and as the house had been recently painted, and had a bank of flowers in the parlour window, it was easily distinguishable from its neighbours, which were generally faded and dingy in appearance. To describe the beating of the heart with which Mr. Rowland knocked at that freshly painted green door would be almost more than words are equal to : a lover at the crisis of hope and fear, not knowing what was to be the answer to his suit, could not have been more agitated than this sober-minded, middle-aged man. It occurred to him at the last moment not to give his name, but to trust to his sister-in-law's recognition of him, and thus have his first view of his children entirely without any warning. He had scarcely done this, however, before he began to think that to have given them the fullest warning would have been better, so that his first impressions should have been of their very best aspect prepared to please him. But this was only after it was too late to change.

"Wha'll I say ?" said the servant girl, so decidedly bearing that aspect that she could not have been called the maid, or the servant, or anything but the girl. She was wiping her hands with her apron to be ready to take a card, and a cap had been stuck on rather at random upon a mass of curly and not very well-tended hair.

" You can say it's a gentleman to speak to Mrs. Brown," said Rowland, stepping into the parlour, which was rather dark with its flowers banked up against the window, though the flowers themselves seemed to flourish luxuriantly. There was something horribly familiar to him in the aspect of the room. He had seen nothing like it for many years, and yet he recognized it in a

moment. It was the best room of the respectable mechanic—the parlour in which his wife put all her pride. There was a round stand, covered with a glass shade, of wax flowers in the centre of the table, and it stood upon a still larger mat surrounded with raised flowers worked in crochet in coloured wools standing primly up around. There were a few books laid round like the rays of a star: the *Course of Time* and other grimly orthodox productions of that character. The chairs and sofa were covered with long “antimacassars,” also worked in wool in stripes of different colours; the mantelpiece was loaded with small pieces of china—girls with lambs, jugs with little pictures upon them, and other such impressive articles, and photographs. Hung over it in the place of honour, Mr. Rowland shivered to see his own portrait, flanked on one side by the picture of a bungalow in which he had once lived, and on the other by a group of football players, with names written underneath, one of them being conspicuously marked as “Archie.” Rowland, however, was breathing too quickly to allow him to go up to it, and prepare himself for the appearance of his son. He felt more like running away, and keeping up a fiction of being in India still.

While he was looking round him in consternation and alarm, he was suddenly aware that the door had opened, and a little bright figure in coloured muslin and many floating ribbons had come in. She twisted herself as she walked, with a swaying and movement of all the bright-coloured ribbons, and came forward with an apparent intention of shaking hands with the stranger. But stopping at the distance of a step or two, said with another twist, “Oh, I thought I knew you! Was there anything you might be wanting that I could do?”

“I am waiting to see Mrs. Brown,” he said.

“Oh! that’s aunty,” said the girl. She looked at the elderly visitor with a slight air of contempt, as if a man who could prefer to see aunty instead of herself was a most curious specimen of humanity. And then she laid down upon the table a parasol she had been carrying, and her gloves, and a small basket of flowers. “I’ve just been out to the nursery garden to get a flower,” she said, “I’m awfully fond of flowers. D’ye like them?—Will I give you one for your button-hole—if you’re one of aunty’s friends?”

“You are very kind,” said the tremulous father, “but had you not better wait till you see if aunty recognizes me for one of her friends?”

“Oh, it’s no matter,” said the girl, “a flower is neither here nor there—and she’ll not be fit to see a gentleman for a good while. She likes to put on her best gown, and her cap with the red ribbons, like the lady in the ‘Laird of Cockpen’—D’ye know the song?”

“I used to know it long ago—before I went to India——”

“Oh, you’ve come from Ingia? Papa’s out there—I wonder

if you've come from papa. Archie and me, we are always wishing he would send for us. It would be awful fun. But he says he's coming home. I hope he'll not come home. I hope he'll send for us out there. Isn't it far better fun out in Ingia than it is here?"

"I don't know about the fun here. Do you remember your father?" he asked.

"No," said the young lady indifferently, "I was a little baby when he went away : and he must think I'm a little baby still, for he never sends me things that you might think he would. I've seen girls that had grand necklaces and things, and bangles. Bangles are very much worn here now. But papa never sent me any. I had to buy what I wear."

She held out a wrist to him laden with these ornaments of the flimsiest description, wires of silver manufactured to suit a sudden demand.

"I am sure that he would have sent you things like these had he thought you cared."

"What for would I not care?" said the unconscious girl with great reasonableness. She turned the bangles round and round upon her outstretched arm, holding it up to see how they looked, and not unwilling, perhaps, that the visitor should see how slim and white it was. The girl was pretty in her way. She had a wonderful amount of ribbons, a necklace with several lockets suspended round her neck, and about a dozen bangles on each arm. What with looking at these, letting them drop upon her arm to judge the effect, glancing at her figure reflected in the little flat glass on the mantelpiece, and casting stealthy looks aside at the stranger to see how all these pretty ways moved him, she had the air of being so fully occupied that there was no wonder it did not occur to her to compare his elderly brown face, with the portrait of her father hanging over the mirror on the wall.

"Is your brother at home?" Mr. Rowland said.

"Archie! oh no, he's never at home. It's past the season for football, perhaps you know, but he's taken to cricket to fill up his time. He's not a dab at cricket," the girl said with a laugh. "It's more an English game than a Scotch game, and Archie is awfully Scotch. He goes on about the flag and that nonsense. Now, I never mind : I like people just to be pleasant, whether they are English or Scotch."

"That is the most sensible way," said the father.

"Do you hear aunty," said the girl, "rummaging about to get herself dressed, as if you would ever notice what kind of a gown she had on ! I always put on a nice frock in the morning, and then I am fit to be seen all the rest of the day."

"But perhaps," said Mr. Rowland, "you have had more advantages than your aunt has had. You have been at school, and learnt a number of things."

"Oh, yes, I've been at school," said the girl. "I was at Miss

Gibbs' in St. Vincent Square. It's rather a grand place ; but I have my doubts about what we learnt there. Aunty sent me because it was so grand—the parents coming in their carriages—Mr. MacColl's daughters, that has the splendid shop in Buchanan Street, and people like that. Miss Gibbs only took me because she was told about papa being so rich. The MacColls have a pony-trap of their own, and a boy in livery to drive about with them," said Marion, with a discontented face. "If my papa is really so rich, I don't see why I shouldn't have a pony-trap too."

"When he comes home——" Rowland began.

"Oh, when he comes home ! I once thought I would like that, though both Archie and me would have liked it better if he had sent for us out to Ingia. But maybe you don't know what has happened ? Papa has married again ! He's married a governess, or something of that kind, that has just caught him for his money. Aunty says there are no fools like old fools. And what will we be now ? We might just as well be anybody's children as belong to a man that has got a new wife. She is just sure to put him against us, to get all the money for herself——"

It was all Rowland could do not to spring up and silence with an angry hand this little pert voice, with its ignoble complaint. He was very angry, but he subdued himself. "I should like to see your brother," he said curtly, for just then the door had been heard to open by a latch-key, and some one had come in.

"Archie," said Miss Marion, elevating her voice, but without any other movement. "Come in here. Here's a gentleman that knows papa."

The door of the room was ajar. It was pushed open, more gently than might have been expected, by a tall lad, his face highly coloured by the still unsubdued flush of violent exercise. His countenance was of a milder, perhaps feebler, type than that of his sister, and his dress and manner were something between those of an assistant gentleman in a shop and a young clerk. His clothes were good enough, but not very well made or carefully kept. Rowland's heart gave a leap, however, when this head looked in, for the boy had his mother's eyes—kind, honest, well-meaning eyes, devoid of guile. They looked in with an inquiry in them, and then brightened up. The door opened wide, and the young man came in and went up to Rowland, holding out his hand : "If he's from papa," he said, a little broadly—(papaw would be nearer the sound, yet not so much as that), "he's very welcome." In the delightful revulsion the father felt unspeakably grateful, though there was little to call forth that sentiment.

"I've been telling him," said Marion, holding up her arm again in order that her bangles might drop back with a tinkle, which evidently was agreeable to her, "that we're very disappointed that papa didn't send for us to Ingia, and then we

would have taken care of him and stopped this awful marriage, which will just be our destruction. And it would have been awful fun out there."

"You will think we've no business to speak of his marriage in that way. And neither we have," said the youth. "He's old enough to judge for himself."

"Old enough!" said Marion; "just so old that the parliament should stop people from making such fools of themselves. But there's no fools like auld fools, as aunty says."

"I don't go so far as that," said Archie, with an air of impartiality, "but of course it was a great disappointment. We've been brought up to think everything would be ours; and then, as my aunt says, there will perhaps be a large young family, and everything spoiled for May and me."

A flush such as would not have misbecome a young lover—a glow of warmth and pleasure—came over Rowland. He scarcely noticed the boy's reflection, for the curious shade of gratification which the last part of his speech gave him. A large young family;—not that perhaps: but the suggestion seemed to fill his veins with new life.

It was at this moment that a sound was heard upon the stairs, announcing Mrs. Brown's speedy appearance: a rustling of silk, and tinkle of ornaments, and some half-whispered remarks to the servant girl—"Ye tawpy! why did ye no show the gentleman into the drawing-room? He's just in the parlour, and that's not the place for visitors. When I give a ring to the bell, mind that ye're ready wi' the cake and wine."

"Dear me," said Mrs. Brown, appearing in the room, and using her full and sonorous voice, "May, what tempted ye to bring a gentleman into this small bit of a room—just a family parlour, no fit for visitors, and the drawing-room standing useless up the stair? I havena heard your name, sir, but I'm sure I'm glad to see ye. I was in the middle of some femily business, and I could not get away before."

Her appearance, however, contradicted this excuse. Mrs. Brown had put on a silk dress of a brilliant colour, which she called ruby, and which glistened and rustled exceedingly. She wore a big locket on her ample bosom; her watch, a large one, was twisted into her belt, depending from a long and heavy gold chain, which was round her neck. She had a number of rings upon her fingers. Her cap was an elaborate construction trimmed with ribbons of the same colour as her dress. Her appearance, indeed, as, large and ruddy and full of colour, she came in through the narrow doorway, turned the very atmosphere in the room to a rosy hue.

"Jean," said Rowland, rising from his chair.

She gave a scream, and gazed at him with wondering eyes. "Wha are ye?—wha are ye?—for I'm sure that I've seen ye before. The lass has no sense to ask a visitor his name."

"Is it possible that ye don't know me, Jean?"

"God bless us!" she said, "it's just Jims Rowland himself! Eh, man, I'm glad to see ye, Jims. Is it just you!—bairns, it's your papaw. Lord bless me that I should ha' been such a time putting on my cap, and Jims Rowland waiting for me down the stair."

"Papa-w!" with about half of a W at the end of the last syllable, said Archie.

"Papa!" said Marion. They were both discomfited, but the girl least. She fell back a little upon the bodyguard as it were of her brother. "It was *you* that said that about the new family," she whispered in Archie's ear.

"I am not denying it," said Archie. "He had no business to come in like this and take us unawares."

Mrs. Brown gave Rowland a fat hand to shake, and then she subsided into a chair and began to cry. "Eh, to think it should be you! and sae mony years come and gane since ye parted with us a—and such things as have happened. Ye was but young then, and your heart was running on many a thing out of common folks' way—and to see ye back again looking little the worse, and a' your fancies fulfilled! It's just the maist wonderful thing I ever heard of. But eh! Jims Rowland, you're an awfu' changed man from what ye were when ye went away."

"I am seventeen years older," Rowland said.

"It's no that—but you're far different. You were a heart-broken lad then. 'Twas for the loss of your wife, my bonnie sister Mary—and now you're back with a new lady to put out her very name from the airth."

"I think," said Rowland in his own defence, "that not to marry again for more than sixteen years was surely enough to show my respect for her memory."

"I never thought you would have married again," said Mrs. Brown. "Mony a time it's been said to me, 'He'll get another wife out yonder'—but I would never believe it. I just could not think it true. Eh, man, when ye had a bonny dochter o' your ain grown up, and just real well qualified to be the mistress of her faither's house——"

"Jean," said Mr. Rowland, with seriousness, "I have a great regard for you. You've been, no doubt, a careful guardian of the children—but I cannot answer to you for what I do."

"Na, na, I never imagined it. Ye just acted to please your ain sel', considering nobody. I'm no finding fault—I'm just wondering. And there's the bairns. What think ye of them? Are they no a credit to any house? and a pleasure to the eyes, and a comfort to the heart?

She drew Marion forward with a vigorous hand, and placed the two side by side, confronting their father, who sat and gazed at them helplessly. Two well-grown, well-looking young creatures they were indeed. But Rowland gazed at them with a gradual dying out of all light from his face: his lip dropped, his eyes grew blank. What could he say? Nothing: there was

little to find fault with, nothing that could be expressed in ordinary words. A sort of dread came over him as he looked at them, the boy and girl of whom he knew nothing ; who had speculated on him, a being of whom they knew nothing, as to what he would do for them, send for them to India, which would be awful fun, or disappoint them of their lawful expectation of being his heirs. He might never have known what were their sentiments, and perhaps would have remained remorseful all his life, thinking himself to blame in not responding to their affection, but for this unintentional revelation. And now it astonished him to find himself in face of the two who had formed such clear opinions of their own as to what his duty was, and how he had deviated from it. They thought his duty was to take care of and provide for them—and he thought their duty was to regard their unknown father with affection and submission. And neither one nor the other had come true. He could not make any reply to their aunt's appeal. He got up and went to the window, and walked about the little room, knocking against the furniture. "This is a pokey little place you are in," he said, by way of getting rid of some of the vexation in his mind. "I could have wished that you had been in a better house."

"It's a very good house," said Mrs. Brown. "This is just the femily parlour—but if ye'll come up to the drawing-room, ye'll see what a nice room it is. It's just as pleasant a house as there is in Glasgow, if maybe no so big as in some of those new crescents and squares out on the Kelvin Road. But everybody knows that the Sauchiehall Road is one of the best pairts. What ails ye at the house? it is just a very good house, quite good enough for the bairns and me."

Rowland could make no reply. He stood and stared blankly out of the window into the elder-berry tree, and said no more.

## CHAPTER XI

"You will stay to your dinner?" Mrs. Brown said. The moment that these words, prompted by an inalienable Scotch hospitality, whose promptings are sometimes less than prudent, had left her lips, she reddened suddenly, and cast an alarmed look at Marion, who, for her part, was still standing contemplating her father, with a look in which a little defiance was concealed under a good deal of curiosity. The girl was considering how to approach and mollify this unknown parent, who, after all, was papa, the giver of all things, and upon whom was dependent the comfort, not to say grandeur, of life to come. It was a pity she had spoken so unadvisedly about his wife, but that, after all, was his own fault. Marion had some experience in novels, which supply so many precedents to the ignorant and

young, and knew what a meeting between a father and his children ought to be. He ought to have taken them into his paternal arms. She, the girl, ought to have thrown herself upon his bosom in tears and rapture. He ought to have lifted his eyes to the skies or the ceiling, and have said : "Just like this was her mother when I saw her first!" None of these things had been done, and the girl was a little at fault. To look at his back as he stood at the window, evidently out of temper, discouraged and discouraging, was a thing that suggested no kind of original procedure to her mind. And she was consequently of no manner of comfort to her anxious aunt, who had instantly remembered that the mid-day dinner of the family was nothing but hotch-potch. And how was she to set down a rich man, who fared sumptuously every day, to a dinner of hotch-potch? Marion's mind was occupied with much more important things. How was she to do away with the disadvantages of that first introduction, and make herself agreeable to papa? A girl in a novel, she began to think, would steal up to him and put her arm through his, where he stood looking out into the elder-berry tree, and lean her head upon his shoulder, and perhaps say "Dear papa!" But Marion's courage was not quite equal to that. As for Archie, he simply stood still and stared, too completely taken by surprise to make any movement whatever, contemplating his father's back with unspoken disappointment and dismay.

"Weel," said Mrs. Brown, after waiting in vain for a response, seizing dexterously the opportunity of escape ; "I'll just leave ye to make acquaintance with one another, for I have things to see to in the house ; and, Marion, you'll just see that your papa has a glass of wine, for the dinner, as you're aware, is no till two o'clock. I'll send in the girl with the tray—she ought to have been here before now—and I'll leave you two to entertain your papaw."

Then there followed another rustling of the silken gown, and tinkle of the long gold chain, with its bunch of *breloques*, after which came another tinkle, that of glasses, as "the girl" brought in a tray with two decanters, a large plate of shortbread, and one of another kind of cake. The wax flowers had to be lifted from the centre of the table to make room for this, and the process occupied a little time and a good deal of commotion, of which Rowland was conscious with increasing irritation and annoyance. He began to feel, however, that the position was ridiculous, and that to stand at the window, with his back to the other occupants of the room, was certainly not to make the best of the situation in any way. He turned round accordingly, and threw himself into a chair, which rocked under him. The strangeness alike and familiarity of the scene were more bewildering to him than words could say. Mrs. Brown, in the wealth which he had supplied, had done all she could to be genteel, poor woman, according to her lights. The tray with the port and sherry was her best rendering of what a proper reception ought to be. In

the foundry days it would no doubt have been a little whiskey and a bit of oatcake. The instinct was the same, but, according to all the good woman knew, this was the most lofty and cultured way of setting it forth.

"Will you take port wine or sherry wine, papa?" Marion said.

"I will take nothing, thank you. Shut the door, I beg. I want to speak to you, my dear." He turned towards her, but his look stopped short at Archie—at Archie, the loutish lad whose lowering forehead was bent over his mother's honest blue eyes.

"I did wrong not to tell you at once who I was. I suppose I had some absurd idea that you might recognize me. To make up for this, I'll forget all the foolish things you have said about my wife. As they arise from simple ignorance, and you have had unfortunately no acquaintance with ladies, I'll look over all that, and we'll begin square."

Marion listened, standing with the decanter in her hand. "Will you really take nothing, papa; not a little sherry to keep you going till dinner-time?" she said.

"My aunt," said Archie, "is a very good woman; she has been everything that is kind to us, and my own mother's sister—more than the grandest lady in the land. If she is not a lady, neither was my mother, I suppose?"

"Your mother was—like nobody else, nor to be compared with anybody else," said Rowland hastily. "But you are quite right to stand up for your aunt. I don't doubt she has been very kind to you."

"Oh," said Marion, turning her head, "no more than was just her duty, papa. We've done a great deal for her. There is just as much to be said on the one side as the other. You can take a piece of shortbread, Archie, and a wee drop of the sherry wine will do you good."

The lad pushed her hand away somewhat rudely. "I wish," he said, "you wouldn't interrupt what papaw says."

The girl broke off a little piece of the cake for herself. She poured out a little of the port and sipped it. "Aunty will be vexed if she thinks it hasn't been touched," she said, munching and sipping. Rowland turned his look from her to that pair of blue eyes which were like his Mary's. They were the only comfort he had in the strange circumstances. He addressed himself to them as to something in which there was understanding in this uncongenial place.

"I am afraid, my boy," he said gently, "that we've all been wrong. I first for forgetting that you were growing into a man. It was only my wife's inquiries, anxious as she was to hear everything about you, that showed me my dreadful mistake in this respect. And your aunt has been wrong, which was very excusable on her part, in forgetting that your bringing up, for the position you are likely to have, should have been different. Where have you been at school?"

"I've been at a very good school," said Archie ; "it's no fault of the school. I've maybe been a little idle. Aunty always said —that is, I thought, as there was plenty of money, what was the use of being a galley slave. So I just got through."

"And what *is* the use," said Marion, "of toiling like the lads that have to go up for exams. when you are such a rich man, papa, and he will never need to work for his living? It's always a nice thing to get grand prizes ; but he was not going in for anything, and what for should he have risked his health, that was of far more consequence ?"

"Let's alone, May. I was maybe wrong, but that was my own opinion, papaw."

"Don't say papa," said Rowland, glad to give vent to a little of the intolerable impatience that possessed him. "Call me father. You talk about exams. and working for your living. Do you know what a young man of the upper classes, far better than you, is doing at your age ?—I don't mean the fops and the fools—I hope," he said with some vehemence, "a son of mine will never be either the one or the other. Do you know what they do? They work in their colleges till they are older than you, or they go and travel, or they're away with their regiment. There are idle ones, but they are no credit, any more than an idle working lad is a credit. Are you doing anything, boy ?"

Archie's countenance fell a little. "I'm in two or three debating societies," he said ; "there's a great many students in them. We have very good debates. I've read a paper twice ; on the Scotch question and about local government."

"What's the Scotch question ?" said Mr. Rowland ; but like other careless inquirers, he did not wait for an answer. "At your age," he said, "you are better employed learning than teaching, in my opinion."

"Oh, papa," said Marion, who had finished her cake and her wine, "it's not teaching! He doesn't get anything for it. He subscribes to keep up the society. It's quite a thing a gentleman might do."

"Hold your tongue, May!" said her brother.

"Quite a thing a gentleman might do!—and he is not a gentleman, but only a wealthy engineer's son," said Rowland with a sudden flash of mortified pride. The boy in his badly-cut clothes filled him with an exasperation not less keen than it was mingled with tenderness for his mother's eyes, and the ingenuous expression in his own countenance. "I've been a fool !" he said ; "I thought, I suppose, that you would take my rise in life like nature, and start from where I ended. I hoped you would turn out like—the lads I've been accustomed to see. How should you? They all started from gentlemen's houses, and had it in their veins from their birth."

His two children stood opposite to him listening to this tirade, which they only half heard and did not half understand. They were quite bewildered by his heat and vehemence and apparent

displeasure. What was it that made him angry ? Marion thought that her brother was very like a gentleman, and he thought that she was very like a lady. It was the utmost length of their ambition. The MacColls, whose father had the splendid shop in Buchanan Street, were not so like ladies as May, though they had a carriage with a pair of ponies. And as for Archie, he was of opinion that he was himself one of those manly and independent thinkers, whose mission it was to pull down the aristocrats, and to abolish caste wherever it might appear.

Mr. Rowland took another turn to the window, and wiped his forehead and came back to his chair. He was very anxious to subdue himself, since the defects of the two young people were not their fault, nor were they at all likely to be cured in this way. He tried even to put on a smile as he said to Marion, "And what are you doing with yourself ?"

"Oh," said the girl, "I'm just like Archie. I am doing nothing to speak of. Aunty has always said it was not necessary, and there is very little to do. It's no profit making our things at home, for you can buy them cheaper in the shops. At first Aunty used to make Archie's shirts, but they never fitted him, and it was no saving. So I just fiddle about and plague everybody, Aunty says."

"And who are the people you plague ?" said her father.

"Oh !" The young lady hung her head a little and blushed and laughed. "Well ! there's Archie and Aunty first of all ; and then there's Archie's Debating Boys, as we call them ; and the Philosophers—fine philosophers to be so minding what a lassie says !" She laughed again consciously. "I am sure I never say a word to them but nonsense," she cried.

Mr. Rowland drew a long sigh out of the bottom of his heart. He had not thought much of the young ladies at the station, the General's daughters and the others ; but Marion, as she stood with her head down and that foolish laugh, conscious of her effect upon the Philosophers, and proud of it, was still another species less honourable to womankind. What Evelyn would say ! flashed across his brain like an arrow. But it was not her fault, poor thing ; and he could not mend it. It was his duty, at least, as her father, to bear with her, to find no fault. For, after all, this was the natural outlet for a girl who had no other interests in her life.

"You must have," he said, "a little sense to talk to me now and then, for I am past the time for nonsense. There is nobody," he added with a little hesitation, "who will teach you that better than my wife."

"Oh !" said Marion : then she raised her eyes quickly, "she will be awfully clever, and know everything—for wasn't she a governess when you were married to her, papa ?"

"No, she was not a governess," he said quickly. "That is a delusion which you seem to have got into your minds. Let me hear no more of it. She was a Miss Ferrars, of Langley Ferrars,

one of the oldest families in England—as different from me in origin as she is superior to me in every quality. If you were in the very least like her, I should hope one day to be proud of you, Marion. But you will have to get rid of a great many defects first."

Marion made a little *moue* which was not unnatural. It was of course a very unwise speech on her father's part—but it is difficult under such exasperation to be always wise. She felt it, however, more prudent to take no notice, but to do her best to find out what were his intentions ; which was a matter of the utmost importance to all.

"If you please, papa, are we going to live on here with Aunty ?" she asked.

The question gave him a startling sensation of relief : was it possible that this might be done ? Would it not be kinder to leave them in the life to which they were accustomed ? Poor Jean would probably break her heart if her children were taken away. They were more her children than his, he reflected ; and money was no object. He could arrange their income so as to give Archie the freedom of a young man, without obliging the poor boy to qualify himself suddenly for the rarified atmosphere of Rosmore. This calculation passed through Rowland's mind with the speed of light. What a happy untying of the knot would it be ! He would not require to saddle himself with the discomfort and disappointment which probably would result from any attempt to prepare them for Rosmore. And they would not like Rosmore. It would be dull for them. No debating societies or philosophers' clubs to enliven their evenings. And the arrangements of the house would be so different. Oh, if he could but solve the question that was before him in that easy way !

But then there occurred to him—the person who would suffer most, the one and only person who would oppose any such compromise with his duty—Evelyn ! He dared not appear before her with the information that he had left his children behind because it was their original sphere, because they would be no credit, an impracticable pair. He could imagine the look with which she would listen, the astonishment in her face. As likely as not she would get her bonnet at once, and, before he could stop, set out to fetch them home. That was the sort of thing she would do. She would have no evasion, not even that about breaking their aunt's heart. In that case, she was capable of suggesting that the aunt should be brought to Rosmore, but not that the responsibility of the children should be shuffled off. What a world of thoughts can be disposed of in a minute or two ! This whole course of argument, question and reply, ran through his mind while Marion's short question was being put, and before he could make up his mind what to say in reply. He played with it for a moment, still keeping that blissful possibility before him—"What would you like best ?" he asked.

The girl and the boy looked at each other—they too had a multitudinous flood running through their minds, rushing like a mill race. They had an agreeable life enough so far as their instincts went: nothing to do—which, being on the very edge of the world that has to work hard for its living, and does not like it, was delightful to them, just as work is delightful to those whom nature provides with nothing to do. But then they were tired of this life all the same, as most people are, if the possibility of a fundamental change is put before them. And though they were rather afraid of their father, and what he might require from them, the excitement of the change to a great house, horses and carriages, and all the splendour they had dreamt of was a strong counterbalance. They did not take Aunty Jean's heart much into consideration: and it would certainly be a terrible break-down from the vague future of glory before them, which all their friends believed in, did they step back into the monotony of Sauchiehall Road and the guardianship of Aunty Jean. They consulted each other with their eyes, and then Marion replied, "We would rather be with you, papa."

"It is with me you ought to be," said Rowland, with a sigh. "I have taken a house down the Clyde, which you may have seen if you have ever been down that way. You see it from the water as you come across. It is called Rosmore—"

"Rosmore!" they both said with bated breath.

"You know the place? It is a place I've always wanted since I was a lad like Archie. I used to stand on the deck and glance at it, but never said a word to anybody. That's where I am going to live."

"For a little whilie—for the salt water?" said they.

"For altogether; for as many years, I hope, as I live."

"Oh!" they said again together, looking at each other. Rosmore was far more splendid than anything they had imagined. They had been with their aunt down to a cottage on the peninsula for the benefit of what Mrs. Brown picturesquely called "the salt water," *i.e.* the sea-bathing: so they knew something of what it was. It was very grand, but perhaps a little oppressive to imaginations accustomed only to the cottage. Their eyes, looking at each other, had a question in them. They were overawed, but a little frightened too.

"I suppose—there will be a carriage, or a gig, or something. It is a long, long way up from the pier."

"There will, I hope, be carriages enough for anything that is required, and horses to ride, and most things that may be found necessary. Archie, I hope," said the father, unconsciously replying to Marion, "can ride?"

At this the boy burst into a great laugh. "I do not know, for I never did try," he half sang, half said, with a big voice, inclining to be bass, but uncertain yet. His face grew red and his eyes shone. He communicated his pleasure to his sister by a look, but this time she did not respond.

"And I——" she said, with a contraction of her soft girlish forehead, "will have to bide at home."

"No," said Rowland, feeling at last a little pleasure in the idea of changing so entirely the lives of his children, and surrounding them with every good thing; "you will find plenty of pleasant things to do. But," he added, pausing, "what will become of the poor Aunt Jean if I take you both away?"

They looked at each other again, and repeated in different tones the same "Oh!" Marion uttered that exclamation with a toss of her head, and a tone of indifference. "Aunty has made plenty out of us," she said.

Archie here, for the first time, took the words out of her mouth. "She has aye expected it," he said. "It would vex her more if you didn't take us."

"Are you sure of that? She has been like a mother to you."

"But mothers expect," said Archie, "that their families should go away."

Marion shrugged her little shoulders. "She'll be free then to go to the saut water or wherever she likes," she said, "and not say she is doing this or doing that, not for herself, but for him and me."

"Then you are not sorry to leave her solitary?" said Rowland.

They consulted each other again with their eyes, with a sort of frank surprise at the question. "Oh, she'll have her friends," said Marion; and she added, "It could never be thought that we would stay here with her, when our papa had come home and was wanting us, and a grand house and horses and carriages. That's very different from Sauchiehall Road."

Archie looked as if he saw something more in the question—but he did not say anything. He was slow of expression, and perhaps not even so nimble of thought as his sister. He looked, however, a little wistfully at his father, studying his countenance.

"And what will become of her?" Rowland said.

"Oh, she will just bide on," said Marion; "she has always expected it. She has her friends. There's the church quite near, and she'll go to all the prayer meetings. She aye says she has no time as long as we're here, but that when we're away, she will go to them, every one. But I think she'll change her mind," said the girl with a laugh, "and go out to her tea."

Archie had caught his father's eye, and was much confused. "It'll not be any the worse for her?" he said.

Before the question could be answered, Mrs. Brown came in, a little flushed but beaming. "The dinner is just ready," she said. "Bairns, did I not tell you to take up your papaw to the drawing-room till the cloth was laid. And you'll be hungry, Jims, just off your journey." She spoke as if she supposed him

to have come straight from India without any chance of a meal upon the way.

The dinner was a curious mixture of what was excellent and what was bad. The hotch-potch, for which Mrs. Brown apologized, was excellent. It is a soup made with lamb and all the fresh young vegetables, which, in the characteristic Scotch *cuisine*, supplies the place in summer of the admirable broth. Rowland had never tasted anything better ; but it was followed by what Mrs. Brown called a "made dish," which was as bad as the other was excellent, but of which the good woman was very proud. "You see my hand has no forgotten its cunning," she said, with a smirk across the table ; and Rowland then recollect ed with dismay that in the distant ages, almost beyond his own recollection, Jean, his wife's elder sister had exercised the craft of a cook.

"Weel," she said, after the meal, herself taking him up-stairs to the glories of the drawing-room, "you're satisfied ? You would be ill to please if you were not, with these two bonnie bairns. And just as good as they are bonnie—Archie as steady as a rock, aye in to the minnint, though thae student lads are no that careful. Eh, Jims, what a pleasure it would have been to my poor sister to have seen them grown up like that."

This softened, even while it exasperated Rowland—for no doubt poor Mary's imagination, like her sister's, could have gone no further than the pert intelligence of Marion and the steadiness of her boy. "I should have liked better if they had been kept to some occupation," he said, "not suffered to lead useless lives."

"Eh !" said the aunt in astonishment, "useless ! but what would ye have them to be, and you a rich man ? You wouldn't have had me bring them up like a puir body's bairns ? They are just as well conditioned as can be, bidable, and pleased with what's set before them. I've had no trouble with them : they will never have given me a sore heart but when they're taken from me—Oh, I'm no saying a word ! It's your right and it's your duty too. They maun go, and I've aye counted upon it—and God's blessing 'll go with them. They've never given me a sleepless night nor a day's trouble. Oh, man, be thankful ! There's no mony that can say as much. The first sore heart they'll give me is when they go away."

The good woman sat down upon one of the many gilded and decorated chairs of which she was so proud, and put her hand-kerchief over her face as she might have done the apron which she was no longer happy enough to wear, and lifted up her voice and wept : "My hoose will be left to me desolate," she said, "me that has been, though with none of my ain, a joyful mother of children. But I'll no say a word. It's just what I've known would happen this many and many a year. And it's my pride and pleasure to think that I give them back to you, everything that two good bairns should be."

Rowland was silenced once and for all. He had not a word to say to the woman thus deeply conscious of having fulfilled her trust. There was something pathetic in the thought that the two children who were so unsatisfactory, so disappointing and incomplete to him were to this kind woman the highest achievement of careful training, everything that boy and girl could be, and that their mother would have been of the same opinion had she lived to see this day.

## CHAPTER XII

ROWLAND went back to his hotel in the evening in much depression, yet excitement of mind. He had taken his two children out with him in the afternoon, with a remorseful desire to please them in any way he could, since he could not feel towards them as their father ought to feel. It was difficult at first to make out how he could please them best, and at last it was Marion's indications of desire that were the rule of the party. He procured the smartest carriage the hotel could supply, with a pair of horses, and drove them about, Marion in the fullest rapture of satisfaction, increased by her father's presents to her of various articles which she admired in the shop windows as they passed. It amused him, and yet hurt him to see the air with which she got down from the carriage and swept into the jewellers and the haberdashers. Her eyes swam in a rapture of light and happiness. She raised her little flowing skirt, which was more like Sauchiehall Road than the temples of fashion which she visited, with an air that suggested velvet. Poor little Marion! it was impossible to be more happy than she was, turning over the pretty things presented to her, and choosing whatever she pleased, while papa, with his pocket-book full of notes, stood by. She had taken him to Mr. MacColl's "splendid shop" in Buchanan Street, with a sense that the school friends who had overwhelmed her with their grandeur might be thereby somewhat subdued in their pretensions; and it was ecstasy to her to buy the most expensive things, and to feel the superiority of the position of patron. "It is a very good shop," she said, so that all the young gentlemen and young ladies behind the counter might hear, "and I will advise mamma, when she comes, to patronize Mr. MacColl."

Archie, who dragged behind, much bored and ashamed of himself, opened wide eyes at the introduction of this name, and Rowland, for his part, had a sudden pang of anger to think that this vulgar little girl should venture to speak of his Evelyn so—before he recollects, poor man, that the vulgar little girl was his own child, and that it was most desirable that she should give that character and title to his wife. "Will I say

the things are for Miss Rowland of Rosmore?" she whispered to him. "Certainly not," he said with irritation. And yet he had no right to be angry with the poor little thing who knew no better. He encouraged her in her purchases by way of compensation to her for his unfatherly thoughts. "And now, don't you think you might buy a silk dress or something for the poor aunty?" Marion tossed her little head.

"She got yon ruby silk just six months ago, and she's got more in her drawers than she can ever wear;" and sinking her voice a little—"it's all off *us*. She would never have had a silk—"

"Hush, child!" said Rowland imperatively; but Marion was not to be hushed.

"It's quite true, papa. She has just dresses upon dresses, and last winter she made down one of hers for me—me that it all belonged to! She said I was too young to have new silks for myself. I never put on the horrid old thing! I would have thought shame for your daughter, papa!"

"There are worse things than wearing old dresses that my daughter might be ashamed of," he said hastily. But then he repeated to himself that it was not her fault: it was his fault—his alone, that he had neglected his children, and how could he ever make up to them for that unfortunate beginning? To please Archie they drove to a cricket match going on in a field in a remote part of the town, where Mr. Rowland's carriage made a great sensation, with the coachman in the hotel livery. Rowland himself was a little ashamed of the turn-out. But even Archie, though much simpler than his sister, jumped down from the carriage with a swagger, and strolled across the ground with an ineffable air of splendour and superiority, which made his father—oh, his poor father!—so conscious of all these weaknesses, laugh. It was a rueful laugh; and to see Marion sit and bridle and plume herself, with little touches of re-arrangement to her hat and her tie and her gloves, looking as well as she knew how, as a fine lady and patroness of the humble but lively scene should look, was such a painful amusement as the poor man could never forget. He could not help being amused, but it was rueful fun. And then he said to himself, repressing at once the levity and the pain, that had he never left them, he would have been as proud of them as Jean was, and never would have found out the imperfections.

Archie brought several of his friends in their cricketing clothes up to the carriage to see his sister, and to be introduced to papaw. Poor Archie could not make up his mind to abandon that "papaw." "Father" seemed almost disrespectful to so great a personage as the rich Rowland, the great engineer. He was very anxious, however, to explain, *sotto voce*, that several of the young men in their flannels who gathered round Marion, and to whom she dispensed smiles and small jokes, like a Duchess at Lord's, were "students," a description which slightly mollified

Rowland. Students were better than shop-boys, which was what Archie himself was painfully like. Never had Mr. Rowland encountered a harder piece of work in his life than to smile and tolerate the small talk of his children and their friends. He could not help comparing them to the people he had been accustomed to in late years,—people, he said vehemently to himself, perhaps not worth half so much! These lads, if they were students, were probably maintaining themselves, living like Spartans, not to draw upon the limited resources at home. How much nobler and finer than the young officers and civilians he had been in the habit of seeing in that same guise, yet how different! That he, a man of the people himself, should so see the difference; that he should be so pained by it, and by the fact that his son was at home in the one strata of company, and would be quite out of the other! How painful, how miserable, how ridiculous, how wrong altogether it was! He exerted himself to talk to some of them, and said angrily to himself that they were much more conversible than the subalterns, at whom he would have thrown a jibe, whom he would not have taken the trouble to talk to! But what of that? Archie swaggered about the ground proud and inwardly uplifted because of the carriage, the pair of horses, the pretty sister, and papaw. Had he dared to ask them all to Rosmore, where they might see the family in their glory, his cup of triumph would have been full; but he did not quite venture upon such a strong step as that.

Then they drove home in triumph to the Sauchiehall Road, where the people next door and next again, looked out of their windows to see the splendid vehicle dash up to Mrs. Brown's, and the baskets of fruit and of flowers that were lifted out. She herself came out to the door to meet them, with her dress rustling, and her gold chain tinkling, and her ruby ribbons floating behind her. "Weel!" she cried, "ye've gotten back! and have ye had a grand drive? and eh, the bonnie flowers; but what an extravagance, for they would cost just a fortune; and a handfu' of sweet-peas is just so pleasant in a room. And the pine aipples! Jims, my man, you're just a prodigal; but we cannot be severe on you, a man just new come home." She was very anxious that he would come in "to his tea." But poor Rowland had borne enough for one day. He made the excuse of business to do and letters to write. "Ou, ay, ye'll just have Madam to write to, and tell her all about your bonnie bairns," Mrs. Brown said, with a cloud upon her brow.

Yes, thank Heaven, he had madam to write to; but whether he would tell her or not about the children was a matter upon which he could not make up his mind. He drove back to his hotel in solitary splendour, still somewhat ashamed of the hotel carriage, the pretension of the showy vehicle, and the shabby horses. Should he tell Evelyn all about the children? It seemed almost a disloyalty to poor Mary who was gone, to confide his disappointment in her children to any one, above all to

the wife who had taken her place, though at so long an interval of years that he felt no disloyalty in that. If Evelyn had been with him, her sympathy would have been his best solace, and she would have found something to say that would have been a comfort to him. He was certain of that—something that would prove to him that things were not so bad as they seemed, that they would mend. But to put it in black and white, to put the disappointment of his soul into words, was what he could not do. He did not even feel sure that he wanted her to know it. If he could only keep his opinions to himself, pretend that they were all he could desire, and leave her to find out ! It was quite possible that she would be more tolerant than he ; her pride would not be injured as his was by the shortcomings of those who were his own. She would not feel the mortification, the disappointment, and perhaps she would not even see so much to find fault with in them. She had finer insight than he had ; she was more charitable. She would see all the good there was, and not so much of the vulgarity. What did she know about vulgarity ? She would think, perhaps, it was characteristic, original, Scotch. Rowland had listened often grimly enough to such fashionable views of manner and deportment. He had heard a man, whom he considered a brute, explained away in this manner. Evelyn might take that view. So he locked up his chief trouble in his own mind, and wrote to her that delightful letter, telling her that whatever she did would be right, whether to stay in town or to set up at once at Rosmore. He was not sure himself that he did not look upon that suggestion of staying in town as a relief and postponement for which he would be grateful. Yet what did a little time matter, one way or another ? Sooner or later the step would have to be taken ; the permanent household formed. Indeed, he felt that it would be natural for the children to expect that their father should take them to London, and let them see something of the world, which was a suggestion at which he shivered more than ever.

Poor Rowland ! being only an engineer, though a distinguished one, and a man of the people, though risen to great wealth, and sometimes even objected to in his own person as not a gentleman, it was very hard that he should be thus sensitive to the breeding of his children, and feel their imperfections as keenly as the most accomplished "smart" man could have done. Perhaps had he not married and learned to see through Evelyn's eyes, this catastrophe might not have happened. And he had been so long parted from the children that there was little real love, only the vague instinct of partiality to counteract the shock : and that instinct of partiality often makes everything worse, giving a double clear-sightedness, and exigence of impossible perfection to the unfortunate parent whose fatherhood is mortifying and miserable to him, not a thing of pride but of shame. These were much too strong words to use—but they were not too strong from Rowland's point of view.

The only comfort he had was in his boy's eyes, which were like his mother's. And even that thought was not without a pang, for it thrust upon him the question whether the mother, had she lived, would not have been like Jean. Had it been so, it was evident that Rowland himself would not have been what he was. He would have stayed on in the foundry and become a foreman, and perhaps in course of time would have ascended the social scale to a house in the Sauchiehall Road : and his son would have been a clerk in an office, and he himself would have been very proud to think that Archie had friends who were "students," and was steady, and read papers at the Debating Society. His brain seemed to whirl round as he thought of all that which might have been. It is usually the better things which might have happened to us that we think of under that formula—but there is another side in this, as in all human matters. And when Rowland thought what might have been the natural course of his life had Mary lived, it gave him a giddiness which seemed to suspend all his powers. Would it perhaps have been happier so ? He would have been very fond of his children, and proud to think that they were taking a step above himself in the world—and Mary would have grown stout like her sister, and would have had, perhaps, a rustling silken gown like Jean's, and produced with pride a bottle of port wine and a bottle of sherry wine when she received a visitor. And he himself would have been proud of his family and contented with his moderate means. He would have taken Archie and May to the saut water, and pointed out to them the opening in the trees and the house upon the knoll with the white colonnade, and Mary would have said with a laugh, "Hoot, your father's just doited about that white house on the brae." What a difference, what a wonderful difference ! And which would have been best ?

James Rowland, tenant of Rosmore, with a name known over India, and his moneys in all manner of lucky investments, and Evelyn Ferrars for his wife, thought of all this with a curious strain of sensation. He was in many respects an imaginative man. He could realize it all as distinctly as if he saw it before him. He knew the kind of man he would himself have been—perhaps a better man than he was now—a straightforward, honourable man, limited in his horizon, but as trustworthy, as honest and true as a man could be. And he would have known all the real good there was in his children then, and they would have been free of the vulgarities and meanness they had acquired by their false position and mistaken training. It was very startling to think how different, how altered everything might have been. Was he thankful that poor Mary had died ? That which had been such a blow to him, driving him out of the country, had been the foundation of all his fortune. It had been the most important event, the turning point in his life. He would never have seen Evelyn, or would have contemplated

her afar off as a fine lady, a being to be admired or made light of, but neither understood nor known. How his head went round and round !

It was naturally the same subject that suggested itself to his mind when he woke next morning to a new day, a day not like the last in which everything was unassured, but one in which certainty had taken the place of doubt, and he had no longer vague and exciting possibilities to think of, but only how to nourish and adapt the drawbacks which he knew. These cost him thought enough, all the more that the practical part of the matter had now to be determined, and every decision of life was so close to him that the sense of perspective failed, and it was impossible to realize the relative importance of things : how he should manage to satisfy their Aunt Jean, being for the moment of as great consequence as how he should order the course of their future existence.

He was received in Sauchiehall Road with great eagerness, Archie hurrying to open the door for him, while both Mrs. Brown and Marion appeared at the window as soon as his step was heard, full of nods and becks and wreathed smiles. Mrs. Brown wore another and different "silk," one that was brocaded, or flowered, as she called it, the foundation being brown and the flowers in various brilliant colours ; and Marion had put on the trinkets he had bought to please her on the previous day in addition to those she had worn before, so that she too tinkled as she walked. Rowland received their salutations with as much heartiness as was possible. But he was scarcely prepared for the questions with which Marion assailed him, dumbly backed up by Archie from behind, with his mother's eyes pleading for every indulgence. "Oh you're walking, papa !" the girl cried with disappointment, "I thought you would have come in the carriage."

"It would be a great nuisance for me to have always to move about in a carriage," he said. "Besides I can't say that I am proud to be seen behind such horses, a pair of old screws from a hotel."

"Oh, you're not pleased with them ! I thought they were beautiful," said Marion, "and they go so splendidly—far far better than a cab or a geeg. We were making up in our minds where we were to go to-day."

"Where you were to go ?"

"To show you everything, papa," said Marion. "You must see all the sights now that you are here. Archie and me were thinking——"

"I knew the sights," he said, interrupting her, "before you were born—but if you want the carriage, Archie can go and order it and take you where you please—I have many things to consult your aunt about."

"To consult—aunty !" Marion opened her eyes wide, and elevated her brow, but this impertinence did not disconcert Mrs. Brown.

"They just take their fun out of me," she said, with a broad smile ; "they think I'm a' of the old fashion, and ken naething. And deed it's true. They're far beyond me with their new-fangled ways. But ye see your papaw is no altogether of your way of thinking, Mey."

Marion nodded her little head again and again in astonished acquiescence ; but by this time it had dawned upon her that to drive everywhere in "the carriage," she and Archie alone, would perhaps be still more satisfactory than with the grave countenance beside her of a not altogether understood papa—who did not enter into their fun, or even understood their jokes. The brother and sister accordingly hurried out together well-pleased, and Marion established herself in Rowland's room at the hotel while Archie ordered the carriage. The girl turned over all her father's papers, and examined closely the photograph of Evelyn which stood on his mantelpiece. "That'll be her," she said, and took it up and carried it to the window to see it better—"but no great thing," she added under her breath, "to have made such a catch as papa ! Dearbless me, she's a very ordinary woman—nothing to catch the eye. She'll have plain brown hair, and no colouring to speak of, and not even a brooch or a locket round her neck. What could he see in a woman like that ?"

"It's a nice kind of a face," said Archie.

"So is aunty's a nice kind of a face—and plenty other people—but to catch a man like papa !"

Mrs. Brown had no greater pleasure in life than to see her children go out together in their best clothes, bent upon enjoyment. She stood at the window and watched them, as she did on every such opportunity. It was her way, even of going to church and performing the weekly worship, which was all she thought of in the light of religious observance—to watch them going, dressed in their best, with their shining morning faces, and Marion's ribbons fluttering in the air, and to laugh with pleasure, and dry her wet eyes, and say "the blessin' of the Lord upon them !" The humble woman did not want a share in their grandeur, not even to see the sensation they made when they walked into church, two such fine young things. She was content with the sight of them walking away. It was only when she turned her eyes, full of this emotion and delight, upon James Rowland's disturbed and clouded face, that she began to understand that all was not perfectly, gloriously well.

"Bless me ! oh, Jims ! a person would think you were not content."

"If you mean with the children," he said, "I don't see any reason I have for being content."

"Lord bless us !" said Jean, thunderstruck. She added after a moment, "I canna think but it's just your joke. No to be satisfied, and far more than satisfied ! If you're no just as prood as a man can be of the twa of them—I would just like

to know what you want, Jims Rowland. Princes and princesses? but so they are!"

"It is quite just what you say," he replied, hanging his head. "It's my fault or it's the fault of circumstances, that makes a thing very good in one place that is not good at all in another. But never mind that ; the thing to be considered is, what is the best way of transplanting them to so different a kind of life."

"Oh, there is no fears of that," said Mrs. Brown ; "if you were transplanting them, as you say, from your grand life to be just in the ordinar' as they've been with me, I wouldna say but that was hard ; but it's easy, easy to change to grandeur and delight ; there's few but's capable of that."

"If it was all grandeur and delight !" said Rowland ; "but there is not very much of the first, and perhaps none at all of the other. No delight for them, I fear. A number of rules they will have to give in to, and talk, dull to them, that they will have to listen to, and no fun, as they call it, at all ; I don't know how they will like being buried in a country place."

"They will have horses and carriages, and everything that heart can desire—and servants to wait on them, hand and foot."

"Oh, yes, they will have horses, but, I suppose, they won't be able to ride ; and carriages they don't know how to drive ; and a road to take exercise upon, which to me is beautiful, but which leads to nothing but a view, and not half a dozen people to be seen all the way. Marion will not like that. I may get the boy broken in, but the girl—I don't know what my wife will do with the girl !"

"Ye are no blate," cried Mrs. Brown, "to speak of my Mey as the girrel ! or what your wife would do with her. It's that that's ruined you, Jims Rowland—your wife ! What had you ado with a wife, a strange woman, when your own dauchter was growing up, and old enough to sit at the head of your table and order your dinner to you ! It sets you well to get a wife that will not know what to do with the girrel ! What would my sister Mary say to think that was the way you spoke of her bonnie bairn. Man, I never knew ye had such a hard heart !"

"The question has nothing to do with my hard heart, if I have a hard heart," said Rowland. "We'd better leave that sort of thing aside. The question is, how are they to be brought into their new life ?"

Mrs. Brown wiped her eyes, and held up her head. "The thing is just this," she said, "I see no other way, nor any difficulty, for my part : ye'll just take them home."

"Ah !" said the agitated father walking up and down the room, "it is very easy to speak. Take them home, but when, and how ? without any breaking in ? without any preparation to a life they don't understand and won't like ?"

"Bless me ! are you taking them to be servants, or to learn a trade !" cried Mrs. Brown.

## CHAPTER XIII

IT was very difficult for Rowland to decide what course he ought to pursue practically at the moment after these bewildering experiences. He was a man who had a great contempt for what he would himself have called shilly-shallying, and for the impotence which could be mastered by difficulties, and could not make the most of a trying situation. He would a little time before have scoffed at the possibility of any such thing happening to himself. No such thing had ever happened in the course of his work, which had involved many interests far more important than the interests of two insignificant creatures—girl and boy : which had sometimes been weighted with the responsibility of life and death for many ; and yet he had not paused and hesitated as now. Two insignificant creatures, girl or boy, will blot out earth and even heaven from you, standing so near as they do, annihilating all perspective. What short work would he have made with them had they been a gang of navvies, or more difficult, a staff of clerks or engineers ! But Marion and Archie were a very different matter. They had a right not only to all he could do for them, but to himself and everything that was best in him. Nothing could do away with that claim of nature. Not disapproval, dissatisfaction on his part, not even unworthiness on theirs. And they were not unworthy, poor things. Their only fault it was, and it was not their fault, that their father was in one atmosphere and they in another. Not their fault ! he it was who had left them in that atmosphere—condemned them to it, and he must bear the penalty.

They enjoyed their day in the carriage, driving about wherever they liked, displaying their grandeur to admiring friends—at least Marion enjoyed it to the bottom of her heart. And she was *bon prince* in her elevation. She waited in all her splendour at the door of a little house, where everybody came to the window to stare at “the carriage” while a sick girl was hastily dressed in her best—and took the invalid out for a drive. There was a vein of kindness in the girl, and a warm desire to bestow favours which was partly the product of vanity and partly of a better inspiration. She was really proud and happy when the colour came faintly into the cheeks of her ailing friend, although she never failed afterwards to attribute her recovery to “yon drive I took you.” The kindness was vulgar, and fed conceit, yet it was kindness in its way. Archie was not perhaps so happy. He soon tired of “the carriage,” and desired to be left at the cricket ground, which they again visited, and joined his friends, not without a certain glow of superior rank and importance about him from the fact of his being dropped there

by the carriage, yet glad to escape from a position that was tiresome.

They all dined that evening with Mr. Rowland at his hotel—Mrs. Brown in such splendour of apparel that her brother-in-law was abashed by her appearance. Marion was fortunately more simply arrayed, and her father tried to believe that it was her own good taste which made the difference. The poor man felt all their little solecisms at table with double force, as remembering that he had once himself felt all the perplexity which paralyzed Archie as to what he was to do with his knife and fork and table-napkin, and the finger-bowl which was put before him at dessert. As for Mrs. Brown, she showed no perplexity at all, but frankly broke every rule, stuck her fork into the potato she preferred, helped herself to the salt with her knife, and then ate her peas with it in the most assured simplicity, unconscious of criticism.

"Will you give me a little of that, sir," she said to the waiter. "I'm no just sure what it is, but I would like to try. I tell the bairns no to be prejudiced, but just to try everything."

Rowland felt that the imperturbable waiters were laughing in their sleeves at this strange party. But Marion gave him a little comfort. Marion was as sharp as a needle. She had all her wits about her. She divined from the smallest indication what was the right thing to do; but then she had read a great many novels, in some of which the very circumstances in which she now stood were set forth. Novels are a great help to an intelligent young lady endeavouring to acquire the manners of society to which she has been unaccustomed. Between these several sources of enlightenment she came out with credit from the ordeal, which made Archie feel himself a clown, and which Jean blundered through without being aware. This somehow eased the weight of trouble in Rowland's heart.

"And what are ye gaun to do the morn?" said Mrs. Brown, lying back in an easy-chair with her cap strings unloosed, and a genial glow upon her countenance after her abundant meal. "Have ye some ferlies to let your father see? But he just knew them all before ye were born."

"I am afraid I have no time to see ferlies," said Rowland. "I've seen a great many in my time. I am engaged to-morrow: and I must get back to London as soon as I can. I can't leave my wife alone."

"Oh, man, ye might first let the bairns have their turn," said Jean, with a cloud on her brow. But alarmed by the darkness of that which gathered on his, she added hastily, "They might take a trip down the water if ye're so busy. Ye canna expect them to settle to anything and you here."

Then Rowland had a momentary struggle with himself. He came out of it victoriously on the side of virtue. "I am going," he said, "to Rosmore to-morrow. Perhaps you would like to come with me, and see the house."

There was a cry of eager acceptance from Marion of this proposal, and Archie gave his father a look of pleasure. Mr. Rowland was emboldened to add—"We must make the most of it, for in a day or two I must go to London."

"That's just what they would like best of all," said Mrs. Brown. "Archie, puir laddie, would just give his little finger for a look of London. I've always said no, for it's a place full of temptations. But to be with his own father makes a great difference."

"And me," said Marion. "Ah, papa," she added, studying his countenance, "I want to see London; but far more, I want to see mamma."

"Don't say——!" said Rowland, and then stopped. He felt a sort of pang of indignation to think of this girl calling Evelyn by that name. This girl—his own girl—his child! He stopped short with a hard-drawn breath of vexation. Of course she must say mamma if she would—or mother, a more sacred title. And it would be necessary for Evelyn to submit to it—Evelyn would desire it. Between these two certainties he felt himself caught as in a vice.

"I am sorry," he said, "that I can't take you with me to London—it is out of my power."

"Dear, man," said Mrs. Brown, "you that just have your pockets full of money, how can it be out of your power? It's a journey that costs dear, and living in a hotel is just ruination; but you're no one to consider that. You mauna say it's out of your power."

"Money is not everything," said Rowland shortly.

"Eh no—far be it from me to say it is; but in the matter of taking your two children upon a veesit, what else is there to think o'? Na, na, there are plenty things it canna buy. It can neither bring ease o' body nor peace o' mind; but railroad tickets to London—Hoot! it's siller alone that's wanted—and you that has just your pockets full!"

"It is out of the question," said Rowland, and then he stopped suddenly once more, for he had encountered the wistful look in Archie's eyes—the eyes that were his mother's. It cost him an effort to repeat his negative in the face of that silent appeal. "I cannot do it," he said hastily. "Another time—but not now. However, if you would like to come with me and see the house—"

This proposal was accepted *faute de mieux*, and he set off next morning accompanied by the two young people, who by this time had become a little accustomed to him, and had learned to adapt themselves a little to his "ways." Marion at least had learned to note when he was worried and put out, and though she was not yet at all aware what points in her conduct disturbed him, or that it was her conduct that disturbed him, her quick perception had already noticed that something did from time to time derange his equanimity, and that it was his children who were the cause.

"It will be Archie," she said to herself. Already, so quick is the contagion of a new sentiment, Marion had begun to be dissatisfied about Archie's clothes. His coat was rough and badly made in comparison with his father's coat; his boots were clumsy, his linen dingy. All these things she had found out for herself. Archie was not bad-looking: he was rather handsome than the reverse; but he had not at all the same appearance as his father, who was old and without any graces. This Marion discovered all by herself. She had not attained to any such enlightenment on her own account.

When they got out at Rosmore pier, other revelations began. They found a dog-cart awaiting them with a beautiful horse and a groom, the perfection of whose get-up was more than words could tell, though they were not learned enough to perceive that. Only a dog-cart!—Marion felt that she was coming down from the glories of "the carriage"; but the obsequiousness of everybody around reconciled her a little to the less dignified vehicle. The drive through the woods overawed the young people. They gave each other a look of unmixed gratification and dismay. When they reached the house itself, the dismay perhaps was uppermost, but they did not as yet venture to say a word. Nothing could be more beautiful than the situation of the house, or the woods which approached it, when everything was in the full height of summer; the sun blazing over a country in which at almost every corner there was a burn to toss back a dazzling ray. From the colonnade the view had been opened a little by judicious clearing, and the broad Clyde, like a silver sea, lay glistening at the foot of the knoll, with all its passing boats and sails, and the background of the smoky but not unpicturesque town throwing up its towers and spires on the other side of the estuary. They were impressed for a moment in spite of themselves, and lingered looking at the view while their father went indoors.

"It's awfully bonnie," said Archie.

"So it is," said Marion, holding her breath a little. They stood side by side overawed, not venturing to say any more. Indoors they were still more silent, following their father from room to room. In every one of them were workmen, and every kind of luxurious article was being added to the original furniture. By and by they became bewildered by the number of rooms and their names—dining-rooms and drawing-rooms were comprehensible, but the libraries, morning-rooms, boudoirs, studies, made their heads go round.

"And what's this?" said Marion in bewilderment.

"This is Mrs. Rowland's own sitting-room," said a polite functionary with what the young people characterized as an English accent.

"What does she want," said Marion, almost angrily, "with another sitting-room? when she's got the dining-room and the drawing-room, the morning-room and the library."

"Oh, that is just the thing, Miss," said the functionary ; an enigmatical saying which made the girl stare at him for a moment in perplexity, but added no light.

They wandered up-stairs and down-stairs, wondering where their own places were to be in the middle of this bewildering space and unaccustomed luxury. There were some small back rooms in the corner of a wing, to which instinctive suspicion naturally pointed as the "holes" that would be allotted to them.

"That's where she'll put us," said Marion, "to get us out of the way."

Archie did not make any reply, but he thought it very likely. To tell the truth, those back rooms were larger and quite as well fitted up as the rooms in Sauchiehall Road.

Rowland almost forgot their existence as he went over the house, examining what had been done, pointing out what there was still to do. So much of his ideal was in it, of which nobody knew save himself. He had furnished the house in fancy many a time, fitted it up in such a way as house was never fitted up before. It filled him at once with sweet delight and disappointment, to see the reality growing before him. It was not, and could not be, ever so fine as his dreams, and yet it was Rosmore, and it was his. He went about anxious, yet elated, looking out from every window to *savourer* over and over again the well-known prospect—the Clyde, visible in a different aspect from every corner ; the boats upon its dazzling surface, which seemed to hang in space, which seemed to pause and quiver, as if upon the wing, as they crossed the openings, to give the passengers a sight of the house. He knew what was being said on the deck of the steam-boats that rustled across and across. "Oh, ay, it's let—and maybe it will be sold—to Jims Rowland, that was once a lad in a foundry in Glescow, nae mair, and now is the great Railway Man from India, and has come hame very well-off, and gotten the place he had aye set his heart upon. Oh, my lord doesna like to part with it, nae doubt, but siller is not a thing to be turned from the door." He knew that was what was being said. He had heard it himself, or something very near it ; it kept singing in his ears like a pleasant tune—"Jims Rowland, that was once a lad in a Glescow foundry, and has gotten the place he had aye set his heart upon." Yes, it was what he had set his heart upon, and it was his at the last. And to make it perfect was all his intent and thought. He forgot again that natural difficulty which his own neglect and forgetfulness had gone so far to make—the two standing under the colonnade, where they had strayed after their examination of the newly-furnished rooms, and looking out again with a sullen shade over their eyes upon "the view."

"Well?" he said, coming suddenly upon them, full of his own elation and excitement, "and what do you think of the house?" There was a pause ; and then Marion answered him. "Oh,

the house is very well, papa. It is a great big house, and there is a fine view."

"Is that all you have to say?"

"I don't know what more I can say. It will be awfully lonely in the winter-time, and when it's raining; but perhaps you will only come here in the summer, and have another place for the dark days."

"The dark days," he repeated with a little trouble. "You don't know much about it, I'm afraid," he added with an attempt to be jocular; "the fine folk go to London in the summer, and spend what you call the dark days in the country. That's the right thing to do."

"But it's awfully foolish," said Marion with a very serious face.

Archie did not say anything in articulate words, but he made a sort of murmur of assent.

"Now if it was me," said the girl, "I would live here in the summer and take one of the new houses, the new big houses out by the Park, or on the Kelvin Road; they're grand big houses, bigger than this, just like palaces, to spend the winter in; and where we could go to all the grand parties, and be near the football ground—where there was aye something going on. There will be very little going on here."

"Unless there might, maybe, be a curling pond," suggested Archie, but very dubiously, and with a sigh.

Rowland was struck with a certain reasonableness in this suggestion, which chilled his enthusiasm a little in spite of himself. "Come and have some luncheon," he said, "and afterwards we can talk of that." Lunch was set out for them in a small room, one of the many which had bewildered Marion. There was already a tribe of servants in possession, and the small, well-ordered table and silent servants overawed the young people once more. The new butler had the air of a minister (he had, indeed, though Marion did not understand these fine distinctions, the airs of a dean at the least), and it was all that the girl could do not to call him sir. She accepted what he handed to her meekly with a reverential submission to his better knowledge. As for Archie, he had committed himself, but fortunately not so as to be comprehended by any one but his sister, by offering the gentleman in black a chair.

"Well," said their father again, "so you think Rosmore will be dull, and there will be nothing going on?"

"That was my opinion," said Marion firmly. Archie was not to be reckoned upon in company as a steady backer up, and she thought it wisest not to give him the opportunity of betraying her. "The rooms are very pretty, and there's a beautiful view; but you cannot be always looking at the view. And it's very rainy down here. It rains mostly every day. And then there are so many trees. In the winter-time it will be terrible dark, and not a shop on this side, or a place to go to."

"You will have to lay in all your stores, my dear, before the winter comes."

"No, not that," said Marion; "but the shops are always a diversion; it is not for buying things. And there will be no parties to go to."

"Have you many parties," said Rowland with a laugh, "where you are?"

Marion gave a glance round, feeling it necessary to keep up her dignity before the solemn servants. "Oh, yes," she said, "plenty! We go out a great deal. There was a ball last week at the MacColls. I was all in white; at my age, just new *out*, that's aye the proper thing."

"So you are *out*, are you," said Rowland somewhat grimly; "the MacColls are—"

"Oh, papa, they are people of great consideration," said Marion, stopping him; "it is a real good name, well-known everywhere." Marion was making very rapid progress. She was proud at their first interview of knowing the MacColls, who had the great shop in Buchanan Street. Now she had cut adrift the shop and sheltered her friends under the ægis of a well-known name, with all the skill of a leader of society. "But there's nobody here," she said, spreading out her hands and shaking her head.

"How do you know there is nobody here? There seem a number of houses as far as I can see."

"Not of people like us, papa," said Marion; "not of houses that mamma could visit at." She had her eye upon the butler, who was visibly impressed, and to whom she was consciously playing. "There are only Glasgow people coming for the salt water—I mean for the sea-bathing; and the Manse, and the like of that; no gentlemen's houses. Of course it was only *that* I was looking for," she added with the air of a princess. Archie sat opposite and regarded his sister with wide-open eyes. He did not know her in this new development. As a person of rank standing on her dignity, Marion was to him a new revelation. He admired yet wondered at her.

As for her father, he burst into a laugh which was louder and more boisterous than became his usual character. "You might perhaps," he said, "recommend the place to your friends, the MacColls, for the salt water."

"Papa!" said Marion in dismay. The butler was just going out of the room followed by his attendant footman. She watched him till he was quite gone, and the door softly closed behind him. Then she said in a lower tone, "I have always read that the servants know more about you than you know yourselves, and I took care to say very little about the MacColls; for though they are well-off, they are not—in our position, papa."

"Oh, May!" said Archie in consternation.

It was the comic side of this speech which first struck her

father. He laughed once more loud and long. "You will soon be quite fit for a society lady," he said. But immediately fell into absolute gravity again, with a face blank as wood ; discouraging and repressive, had Marion been sensitive. It was very amusing, but one does not desire to be so amused by one's own child.

"I was thinking chiefly," Marion resumed with dignity, "of mamma. She will expect some society, and there will be none ; just the Manse, and a house or two like that, scarcely genteel, not in Our Position. We might do very well, Archie and me, though it would be dull ; but she will be expecting to go out to her dinner, and to be asked to parties, and show off all her grand gowns. And there will be nobody. And not even a shop to go to, to spend an hour in an afternoon. And you cannot always be looking at the view. It is mamma that I am thinking about," Marion said.

He did not again bid her not to speak of Evelyn so ; for was it not the best thing he could hope for, that his child should think of his wife as of a mother ? but his heart revolted all the same, and the girl's commonplace prettiness, her little assured speech, even the undeniable sense that there was in her remarks sense of the most prosaic kind, yet genuine enough in its way, exasperated him. He said dryly, "I think I can take my wife in my own hand."

"Yes," said Marion ; "but maybe it will be a great disappointment to her, when she knows that it is so bonnie a place and all that, and then comes here, so far away, and finds that there is nothing but the view."

Sense ! undeniably it was sense, in its petty, miserable way ; and what if it might be true ? After all, he had only known Evelyn on one side of her character. She was much superior to himself in a hundred ways. She had the habits of a life very different from his, the habits of good society, of knowing "the best people." Rowland himself, in his rough practical way, had not a very profound admiration for the best people. There were even more bores among them, he thought, than among the most simple, and their views were not more elevated. But then Evelyn knew no other life than theirs, and to bring her down here to an unbroken solitude, or to the society of the sea-bathers, the people who came for "the salt water," might perhaps be a dangerous experiment. A cold shiver ran over him, while his daughter prattled on in her cool precocious wisdom. How could he tell that she would be sufficiently compensated by "the view" as to forget everything else, or that she would be able to bear from morning to night the unbroken enjoyment of his own society, and of Marion and Archie ? His mind went away into a close consideration of her previous life as far as he knew it. The society at the station was perhaps not very choice, but it was abundant. The people there knew people whom she knew, were acquainted with her own antecedents, and the kind of life

to which she had been accustomed, a life which he himself did not know much about, much less his daughter and his son. A woman brought up in a great country house, overflowing with company, such as people in humbler positions know only by books, accustomed to go up to town for the season, to make rounds of visits, etc., etc.—would not she perhaps expect all that to begin over again after the period of her humiliation was over, when she had become the wife of a rich man? And if instead she found herself seated opposite to him for life, with his two children only to diversify the scene, though it was in a beautiful house with a beautiful view! how would Evelyn bear it? Nothing but a view! The little monkey! the little wretch! Rowland in his heart was still a man of the people, and he would have liked to take Marion by the shoulders and give her a shake. And yet, probably, she was right.

#### CHAPTER XIV

THERE were a great many hours to be got through still before the evening steamer which would take them across the loch on their way back to Glasgow. And after the luncheon was over, Archie and Marion did not know what to do with themselves. They went out together and walked about the grounds, not without a feeling of elation now and then as they looked back upon the great house with all its velvet lawns, and the commotion of furnishing and arranging which was going on. There were carts unloading at the door which had come all the way from Glasgow, round the head of the loch, a very roundabout way, with delicate furniture which could not bear the transfer from railway to steamboat, and with the great boxes containing Mr. Rowland's curiosities ; the Indian carpets, curtains, shawls, carved ebony, inlaid ivory, and other wonderful things. Had the young people been aware what were the contents of these boxes, they would no doubt have felt that some amusement was possible in the unpacking of them. But, indeed, I doubt whether Marion's interest would have held out long unless there had been pickings—a bracelet, or a brooch, or an Indian chain among the more curious matters to indemnify her for time lost over the carpets or even the shawls, which, as altogether “out of the fashion” (so far as Marion knew) would have had no interest to the girl. But they did not have this source of entertainment, for they were totally unaware what was in the boxes which Marion thought probably contained napery, a kind of wealth not without interest yet scarcely exciting. They stood about for a time in front of the door watching the unpacking of the big chests and crates until the amusement palled. And then they went round to look at the stables, in which as yet

there were only two horses, one of which had brought them up with the dog-cart from the ferry. Archie examined this animal, and the rough and useful pony which acted as a sort of four-legged messenger, with an assumption of knowing all about horses, which was very superficial and imperfect, and did not at all deceive the groom who was in charge, and to whom one glance at the young master had been enough. But Marion did not even pretend an interest which she did not feel, and soon went out yawning and stood at the door, half-despising, half-advising her brother. She felt a little ill-used that there was no carriage which she could order out, as she had done with delight the carriage from the hotel. There would be carriages to come, no doubt, but they would not be for her, and Marion knew that she herself must relapse into a very secondary place. She called to Archie, while he was improving his mind by questions to the groom, with great impatience, "Are you going to stay there all day? with nothing to see," said Marion. And then she broke in upon the conversation, yawning largely, "Is there anything here to see?" The groom informed them of certain points which were considered interesting by visitors, the Chieftain's Jump, and the Hanging Hill, where there was a "grauin point o' view." "Oh, I'm not caring about the view," said the girl pettishly, "but we'll go and see the Chief's Jump. It'll always be something to do." It proved, however, not very much to do, and the young lady was disappointed. "It's only a rock," she said with much impatience; "is there nothing, nothing to see in this dull place?" The groom was a native of the parish, and he was naturally offended. "It's a great deal thought of," he said, "the family—that is the real family—the Earl when he's doun, and the young ladies, brings a' the veesitors here. It's a historical objeck as well as real romantic in itsel."

"I am not caring for historical things: and I don't call that romantic," said Marion.

"Maybe," said the groom, "you would like to go down the wood to auld Rankin's cottage, that has the dougs?"

"What dougs?" cried Archie, pricking up his ears.

"Weel, they're just auld Rankin's breed. He's no historical, nor yet is he romantic: but Miss here will maybe relish him a' the better. He's a funny auld fellow, and the place is just fu' o' dougs—terriers: it's a grand breed—a wee delicate, being just ower weel bred: but awfu' thought upon by the leddies. The Earl and Lady Jean they get then for a' their grand friends."

"I am just sick of the Earl and Lady Jean," said Marion, stamping her foot.

"That's a peety," said the groom, calmly, "for you'll no live long here without hearing o' them. Will I let ye see the way to auld Rankin's? They're funny bits o' things."

"I would like to see the dougs," said Archie mildly.

Marion yielded, being not without a little hope of amusement

hereby. But she took, and pinched, his arm as they went on, saying under her breath, "For any sake don't say that—don't say dougs! It's so common, so Glesco! You are dreadfully Glesco—the man will think you are just like himself."

"What am I to say?" said Archie indignant, shaking his arm free of her hand.

"Say dogues," whispered Marion, drawing out the long O. She was very careful herself to be as English as possible. It had always been her ambition, though the success was perhaps scarcely equal to the desire. She threaded her way through the woods with delicate steps, protesting that it was very damp and a very long way. It was a delightful way through narrow woodland paths, where the hawthorn, which in Scotland is neither called nor has much to do with May, was, still in the height of June, breathing fragrance over the copse, and where the wild rose-buds were beginning to peep upon the long branches that overhung the path. Now and then they shook a drop of moisture upon the passer by, for, needless to say, it had rained that morning, leaving little pools full of reflections in the hollows. Marion gave little jumps when a drop came upon her face, and went upon the tips of her toes past the damp places: but it was always "something to do."

Old Rankin's cottage was in the depths of the wood that encircled Rosmore. He had been a gamekeeper before "his accident." It was supposed in the peninsula that everybody must know about old Rankin's accident, so that no further account was ever given. It was a red-roofed cottage, looking comfortable and cheerful among the grass, with a big ash tree in a plot of grass before the door, and honeysuckle covering it on the southern side where the sun came. In northern regions people are indifferent about the sun. It is a curious fact, but it is so. "Where the sun does not go the doctor must," says the Italian who has almost too much; but the Scot turns his back upon it sturdily and does not mind. The sunshine caught only one corner of Rankin's cottage, and no windows looked that way. It was buried deep in the greenness, adding itself a little ruddy reflection to brighten the atmosphere. In the room on the left side of the door, Rankin himself lay upon his bed, with a large head and shoulders appearing out of the tartan rugs that covered the rest of his person. He had a head like an ancient prophet or bard, with a high bald forehead, and a long gray beard, and with supple long arms which seemed to reach to all the corners of the room. Naturally there was a fire burning, though the day was warm. The mistress of the house came trotting forward, and dusted two chairs with her apron for the visitors. "You're kindly welcome," she said, "Come ben, come ben. He's aye weel pleased to see company." The good woman did not require any introduction of the visitors; but this the groom, more formal, made haste to give.

"It's the young lady and the young—lad from the Hoose," he

said. The pause before his description of Archie was significant. In that coat which Sandy felt was not so good as his own, how was any one to recognize a gentleman? Sandy could not disguise his sentiments. He could not give a false designation even to his master's son.

"I am Miss Rowland," said Marion, graciously, "of Rosmore."

The big gray head and beard were shaken at her from the bed, even while its owner, waving his long arm, pointed out the chair on which she was to sit down. "No of Rosmore, if you'll excuse me, my bonnie young leddy," he said. "Ye may say Miss Rowland, Rosmore, and that will be right enough: but tenants never can take the name of the laird."

"My papa," said Marion half angrily, "is going to buy the place. He is rich enough to buy it ten times over."

"He may be that," said Rankin with polite doubt. Then he added, "You will maybe be wanting a doug."

"We would like to see them," said Archie.

"Oh, I'll let you see them, though it's no a thing I do in a general way. Them that visit at the House, they are a' keen for a sight of my dougs; and I have one here and one there over all the country; a quantity in England. They're wonderful little beasts, though I say it that maybe shouldna—here's one of the last batch." He put down his hand somewhere behind his back and produced a small, round, struggling puppy of a light fawn colour, with brown ears, newly arrived at the seeing stage of its babyhood, and sprawling with all its four feeble limbs, and the tail, which looked like a fifth, in his large hand. Put down upon the bed, it began to tumble helplessly over the heights and hollows of Rankin's large, helpless figure. The sight of it moved Archie, and indeed Marion, in a lesser degree, to greater delight than anything had yet moved them at Rosmore.

"Oh the bonnie little beast!" cried Archie; "oh the clever little creature! Look, May! look at its little nose, and the bits of paws, and the long hair." He threw himself on his knees to get the puppy within reach, which paused in its tumbling on the mountainous ridge of one of the old keeper's knees, to regard the simple young face brought so close to its own with that look of premature sagacity common to puppies. Marion put out her gloved hand to distract the attention bestowed on her brother. "It's just like a little baby," she said.

"Baby! a baby's a little brute: it's ten times nicer than any baby that ever was born. Here, doggie! Man, keep your feet! Eh, look, May! it's tumult off the bed. The little beastie! I've got it; I've got it. Are ye hurt, my wee man?"

"Poor little doggie!" said Marion, patting with a finger the puppy which Archie had placed on her knee. The two young creatures, bending over the animated toy of the little dog, made a group which was pretty enough. And Rankin and the groom looked on sympathizingly, flattered by their applause. To Rankin the puppy was like a child of his own.

"Oh, ay," he said, "it's no an ill specimen. Here's"—and he dived once more into the hidden reservoir from whence came a sort of infantile murmur which had puzzled the visitors at first—"another. It's a variety. Now ye see the twa kinds: them that are no licht in the colour are dark. I could scarcely gie ye my opinion which is the bonniest. What's ca'ed the Skye breed are just the sauvage dougs that would have eaten up the country by this time if they hadna received a check by being made leddies' pets of. One o' my name was the first to tak' the business in hand, and improve the breed. Yon lang, low-bodied creatures, with nae legs to speak of, are the original stock, as the wild bushes are the stock of the rose tribe. My anes are an awfu' improvement in pint o' symmetry—and temper too. They have langer legs and no sae short a temper. Ye'll hear a' the world ower of the Rosmore breed. It's just celebrated from one end o' the country to anither. Lady Jean she was aye coming with orders; but I'm no fond of taking orders especially from foreign countries, like England and the like. I canna bide to send my dougs where they are ill fed or kept careless. There was ae lady that let twa o' them, aye after the ither, get lost. She was a friend o' the minister. I canna understand decent folk keeping on with sic friends. And as for the feeding o' them, leddies are just maist inveterate, and ruins their health, whatever I can say. They'll feed my doggies, just fresh from their guid halesome parridge, with sweet biscuits and bits of sugar, and every silly thing they can think of, and syne they'll write and say the dougs are delicate. Naething of the kind! the dougs are nane delicate. It's just the traitment; if you can think o' onything mair foolish than that—beasts used to guid fresh country air, shut up in rooms with carpets and dirt of a' kinds, and when they're dowie and aff their meat, a dose o' strong physic! And they ca' that a kind home. I ca' it just murder! and that's a' I've got to say."

Rankin had worked himself to a point of vehemence which brought the moisture in great drops to his forehead, for the day was warm and so was the fire. But it cannot be said that his visitors were much affected by it. Sandy the groom, indeed formed a sympathetic audience, but Archie and Marion were too young and foolish to be interested in the old gamekeeper. They played with the puppies, each choosing one. Marion held fast the one of light colour—Archie secured the dark gray. Their comments on their respective prizes ran on through Rankin's speech. "Mine's the bonniest!"—"No, I like mine best. Look at its funny little face."—"Mine has no een at all—just a little spark out under the hair."—"And look, the little brick that it is, showing fight," said Archie in great triumph and elation.

The old gamekeeper wiped his brow, and looked on with a smile of grim amusement at the mimic fight going on between those two little balls of animated fur, "I would ca' those two

Donal'bane and Donal'dhu—as ye might say in a less cultivated tongue, Whitey and Darkie,” he said benevolently. “If ye would like to have the pair of them, I’ll not say no to the Hoose, even when it’s in a tenant’s hands. But ye maun mak up your minds, for I haven’t a doggie about the place that’s no bespoke afore it’s born, and I owe my duty to Lady Jean first.”

“I’m tired hearing of Lady Jean,” said Marion petulantly, throwing her puppy upon the bed.

“Aye, my Missie, are ye that?” said old Rankin : “ye’ll be tireder afore you’re done, for Lady Jean’s muckle thought of in this parish: and a tenant is just a tenant and nae mair—there’s no continuance in them. Your papaw and you will be just here the day and gane the morn. Ye canna expect to be thought upon like our ain folk.—Are ye wantin’ the puppy, Maister — what’s the name, Sandy? I hae never maistered the name,” added the gamekeeper with polite disrespect. “Oh ay, now I mind—Rowland”—he pronounced the first syllable broadly like a street row—“I’m no sure,” he added thoughtfully, “but I may have ken’t your papaw before he went abroad.”

Archie paid no attention to this talk. He had a puppy in each hand comparing them, wondering which he might venture to buy. Dared he go to such an expense as to buy? Mrs. Brown, though lavish in many ways, had not been liberal in the matter of pocket-money, and to spend money for a dog, a creature that would cost something to feed, and could do nothing to make up for the cost of it, would have seemed to her the most wicked of extravagances. Archie was forced by the habit of his life into a great timorousness about money. He did not feel himself justified in spending even a shilling. He looked at the little dogs and longed and hesitated. He had taken one up in each hand with a wild impulse of expenditure, of buying both—unheard-of extravagance!—and then he put one down, feeling the cold shade as of Aunty Jean come over him. Then he bethought himself that his father was a rich man—ay! but then he would probably like to spend his money himself, not to give it to his son to spend. Then Archie put down the other dog upon the bed. But he did not abstract his eyes from the pleasing prospect; and presently a tempting demon suggested to him that about such a big house dogs would be wanted for the purpose of watching, if for nothing else; and he took one, the little dark gray one, up again. It was the bonniest little doggie he had ever seen—ready to play already, though it was such a small puppy, looking as wise as Solomon, though it was so silly; the greatest diversion possible in this dull country place, where there never would be anything to do. And two of them would be funnier still. Archie took up the rival in his other hand. He held them as if he were weighing them against each other like pounds of flesh, but no such thought was in his mind: he wondered if perhaps

Rankin might not want to be paid at once. In case of delay there were a hundred chances that the money might be procured somehow. He might even ask his father—or Mr. Rowland might make him a present. He had bought a great many things for Marion, who, being a lassie, could be gratified in that way more than was possible for a man. A man didn't want silks and things, or even brooches and rings, though Archie would not have disliked a pin. What a man liked was manly things—maybe a bonnie little beast of a doug. What bonnie little beasties they were! and they would be capital watch-dogs when they grew up. Would it do if he were to ask papa? If May wanted such a thing, she would ask in a moment. She might perhaps do it on her own account if she took a fancy to little Light and little Dark. Poor Archie was so absorbed in this question that he did not know what Rankin said.

He was roused by a sweep of the gamekeeper's long arm, which swung over the bed for a moment, then suddenly came down upon one of the puppies and conveyed it swiftly away. Archie followed his movements with a gape of disappointment as he took up the coveted gray. He put out his hand to avert the second withdrawal. "Eh, man, leave the little beastie," he said.

"Would you like to have it? You have naething to do but to say sae."

"I have no money—with me—to pay for't," said Archie, with the profoundest sense of humiliation. He had come into his fortune, so to speak; but he had never felt so poor before.

The gamekeeper answered with a laugh. "'There's plenty of time for ye to put your siller in your pouch, my young gentleman—for I'll no send ane of them out for sax weeks to come—or maybe mair. Ye can come and see them when you like, but I'll no risk my credit for a wheen pounds, me that never sends out a doug but in the best condition and able to fend for themselves. Will I keep the twa for ye? Ye maun speak now, or for ever hold your tongue; for every puppy I have is ordered long before it's born."

Archie looked at his sister, endeavouring to catch her eye, but Marion refused him all help. She betook herself to the task of buttoning her glove, which required all her energies, and then she got up shaking out her skirts: "I'll die," she said, "if I stay longer here—it's so hot, and there's a smell of dougs. You can come when you're ready. I want the fresh air."

"Dear me," said Rankin with scorn; "this'll be a very delicate Miss! and ower grand for the likes of us. Lady Jean never minded the smell of the dougs. Sandy, man, what made you bring such a grand lady here? Are ye for them, or are ye no for them?" he added, severely, turning to Archie. "It's no of the least consequence to me—but you'll have to say."

Archie, with his hair standing on end at his own audacity, gave the order hurriedly, and went out after his sister, with a

sort of despairing sense that he had now committed himself beyond recall, and that the stories he had read in books about the miseries of men who had large sums to make up and no prospect of finding the wherewithal, were about in his dread experience to come true. The gamekeeper and the groom discussed the abrupt withdrawal after their fashion, and with no particular precaution not to be heard by the subjects of their discourse.

"Yon's a queer pair to be gentry," said Rankin. "I would have said a lad and a lass from Glesco in an excursion ; just the kind that comes down at the fair-time, and has nae manners nor education. I'm no much accustomed to that kind—A smell o' dougs ! set her up ! Mony a leddy has sat there and had her crack, and never a word about the dougs, poor things. The smell of a mill would maybe be more in her way."

"Whisht, man," said the groom, "they're maybe listening. Where could they get their manners or their eddication ? They're just Jim Rowland's bairns that my father knew when he was in the foundry ; and they've lived a' their lives with Jean Brown, that was ance the auld man's joe, and nicht have been my mother if a' things had gane straight—think o' that ! I nicht have been their cousin, and I'm just the groom in the stables. 'Od ! I could have brought down Missie's pride if I had been a drap's blood to her. They're no a preen better nor you and me."

"In the sicht o' heaven," said Rankin, "there's no one person better than anither : I dinna just rank myself with the commonality. But I'll allow that the auld family has the pull of it even with me. There's something about Lady Jean now—ye canna say what it is, and yet it maks a difference. I'm a man that has seen a' kinds. The real gentry, and what ye may call the Glesco gentry, and them that's just shams through and through. The Glesco gentry has grand qualities sometimes. They just never care what they spend. If ye put a fancy price upon a little doug, they just say, 'Oh ay, nae doubt you have great trouble in rearing them,' and gies ye your price without a word. The tither kind's no that liberal—they canna bide to be imposed upon. They just stiffen up and they say, 'That's mair than I thought of giving, and good day to ye.' But I canna bide them that would and then they wouldna, that just hankers and grudges and have nae money in their pouches. Without money, nae man has any right to take up my time coming here."

Archie heard this diatribe as he stood outside, waiting under the protection of the great ash tree till a passing shower should have blown over, with a sense of the truth of it which went over him in a great wave of heat and discomfiture down to his very boots. That was just what he was, a sham with nothing in his pocket, combining all the defects of the Glesco great people with an absolute want of that real foundation on which

they stood. He had no education, no manners, nothing upon which any claim of superiority could be put forth. Superiority! he did not mean that. Poor Archie felt himself the equal of nobody, not even of Sandy the groom, who, at least, had an occupation of his own and knew how to do it. And no money in his pocket! that was perhaps the worst of all. He had always heard a great deal about money all his life. Mrs. Brown had an unlimited reverence for it, and for those who possessed it. She had no particular knowledge of the gentry. But to be able to pay your way, to be able to lay by a little, to have something in the bank, that was the height of her ambition. And though she highly disapproved of large expenditure, she admired it as the most dazzling of greatness. "He just never minds what he spends," she had said of Rowland a hundred times, almost with awe. Archie had been accustomed to admire this quality in his father from his earliest consciousness. And to stand on the soil which to him was his father's (though the people of the place were so strong upon the fact that he was only a tenant), almost within sight of the great house which was being fitted up regardless of expense, and to have nothing in his pocket, filled the lad with the bitterest shame and humiliation. "If I had only five pounds—or knew where to get it," he said to himself, with a gesture of disgust and despair. "Five pounds," said Marion, who heard him though he did not want to be heard, and repeated it in her usual clear very distinct voice, not lowered in the least, "What do ye want with five pounds? and why don't you get it from papa?" Archie thought he heard a laugh from the cottage which proved that the men inside had heard. It wrought him almost to fury. He dashed out into the rain and left her standing there astonished. Marion did not care for what the groom and the gamekeeper said. She was quite confident that she had only to "ask papa," and that whatever she wished would fall into her lap. She had not, like Archie, any difficulty in asking papa. After a few moments of hesitation she too stepped out of the shelter of the ash, and followed her brother through the wood. The shower was over, the sun had come out again, every branch and leaf was glistening. The birds had taken up their songs at the very note where they left off, with renewed vigour. Marion too broke out into a little song as she went on. The boughs as she brushed past scattered shining drops like diamonds over her, which she eluded with a little run and cry. Even the woodland walk was thus more amusing than she thought.

## CHAPTER XV

MR. ROWLAND, when his children left him, was left with a very uncomfortable prick of thought, a sort of thorn lacerating the skin, so to speak, of his mind. The suggestion which had been thrown at him as the Spanish bullfighters throw their ornamented darts, stuck as they do, and kept up an irritating smart, though it was not, he said, to himself of the least importance. No society ! He came out to the colonnade in the intervals of his anxious work of supervision, and looked round him wistfully. He walked indeed all round the house, looking out in every direction. Towards the west there were visible, by glimpses among the trees, some houses of the village of Kilrossie, a high roof or two, and the white spire of the newly-built church; to the east, on the other side of the loch, another village-town extended along the edge of the gleaming water, shining in the sunshine. Plenty of human habitations, fellow-creatures on every side : but society ! Wealth has a very curious effect upon the mind in this respect. The people who came to the handsome houses at Kilrossie for the bathing season were many of them much superior to James Rowland in birth and education, and quite equal to him in intelligence, except in his own particular sphere ; yet this man who had been only a man in a foundry when those good people were enjoying the advantages of the saut water, and all the luxuries of comparative wealth, would now have felt himself humiliated had he been obliged to accept the society of the good people at Kilrossie as all he might hope to attain. Their neighbourhood was rather a trouble than an enlivement to his mental vision. And the county people, who had their "places" scattered about at intervals, were in many cases neither so well-off, nor so intelligent as these : and they would look down upon the railway man, while the others would regard him with respect. There was no possibility of doubt as to which of the two he would be most comfortable with. And yet he slurred them over cursorily as if they were not there, and sighed into the sweet vacant air which contained no loftier indication of society. How proud he would have been to have known the Kilrossie people fifteen years ago—how it would have elated him to be asked under their roof ! and now their presence irritated him as a set of impostors who perhaps would thrust themselves upon him in the guise of society : that was not the society for which he cared.

The prick of the banderilla discharged by Marion's trifling little hand was in him all day : and in the afternoon when he had done everything he could, and given all his orders about the arrangement of the furniture, he too went out to take a walk and to spy out the nakedness of the land. He did not go into the woods as his children had done, nor would the dogs have had any

charm for him. He went down to the village, where there certainly was no society except in the one house which held modest sway over the cluster of white-washed and red-tiled cottages—the manse, where the minister represented, if not the wealthier yet the educated portion of the community, and might at least furnish information, if nothing else, as to the prospects and possibilities of the place. In spite of himself Rowland's discouragement reflected itself in his countenance, making him, as so often happens, look angry and discontented. There was something even in the way in which his heel spurned the gravel, making it fly behind him, which betrayed the unsatisfied state of his mind. He had scarcely emerged from his own gate when he met the minister in person, who turned with him and walked along the country road by his side with great complaisance, partly because he was glad to meet any one on that not much frequented road, and partly because it was a good thing to make a friend of the inhabitant of “The House.” The shower which had caught Marion and Archie at Rankin’s cottage, made the two gentlemen pause for a few moments but no more under the shade of an overhanging tree. A shower is too common a thing in that country to disturb any one. It discharged its harmless volley, and then cleared away with rapidity as if the sportive angel who had that brief job in hand was glad on the whole to get it over; which is very often the way with the sky officials in that particular in the west of Scotland. The cloud blew away in a second, dispersing what was left of it in floating rags of white, which fled towards the hills, leaving the sky radiant over Peterston on the other side of the loch, and the loch itself as blue, reflecting the sky, as was that capricious firmament itself—for the moment. The road ran inland, with fields of wheat between it and the margin of the shining water, beyond which rose the low banks of the loch, and further off a background of mountains. If it was not quite equal to the great “view” of Rosmore House, this prospect was at least very fine, soft and clear, in all the harmony of a blueness and whiteness such as a rainy climate confers; and Mr. Rowland too, like his daughter, was comforted by the singing of the birds, which all burst forth again with unusual energy after the subduing influence of the shower. He said, “It is certainly a beautiful place,” as he paused for a moment to look over the green field at the little steamers which seemed to hang suspended in the beatific air, one on the surface of the water, one reflected below.

“Yes, it is a lovely place,” said the minister with a sigh.

He was a middle-aged man dressed in careful clerical fashion like an Anglican priest—a costume new and rather distressing to Rowland, no such thing having been thought of in his early days before he left Scotland. At that period a white tie (or neckcloth, to use the proper phraseology) rather limp, and a black coat often shabby, were all that were thought of as necessary. But Mr. Dean, which was the name of the minister of

Rosmore, liked to be called a clergyman rather than a minister, and would not at all have objected to hold the ecclesiastical rank which is denoted by his name. He was of the new school. He had a harmonium in his church, and a choir which chanted the psalms. He was very advanced, and his wife still more so. He shook his head a little as he made this reply. Yes, it was a lovely place—but—this latter word was inferred and not said.

"I want to ask you," said Rowland, by no means reassured by this, "about the society."

Mr. Dean now shrugged his shoulders a little. "You have perhaps heard of the chapter about snakes in Ireland," he said.

"I have always understood there weren't any." It is a very unjustifiable thing to cut in this way a quotation out of another person's mouth. Mr. Dean was a little disconcerted, as was natural. "Well," he said, "that's just the thing, there is none. I answer the same to your question: there is no society. I hope that Chamberlayne did not bring you here on false pretences."

"I cannot remember that I asked him anything about it, nor would it have made any difference if I had. Society or not, it's always this place I've set my heart upon. But what do you do and the other people in the place?"

"Well," said Mr. Dean, with a glance at his companion's face, "the House, as we all call it, has been our great resource. Lady Jean—you must hear her quoted everywhere, and, I dare say, are sick of her name."

"No; I have not heard her quoted." He remembered that he had not cared anything about it, who was quoted, his whole heart being fixed upon the house.

"She's very good company," said the minister. "She was always our resource. And sometimes the Earl was here. I don't want to speak evil of dignities, but his lordship was perhaps less of an acquisition. And they had visitors from time to time. That's the great thing," Mr. Dean added with perhaps just a touch of condescension to the simplicity of the millionaire, "in the country. You just fill the house, and one amuses the other. My wife and I have seen a great many interesting people in that way, which was a little compensation to us for being buried here. You will come in and take a cup of tea. This is the nearest way."

The Manse garden was on the slope of the hill-side, but the Manse itself was tucked in below, in what was supposed to be a sheltered position, out of the way of all sunshine, or other impudent invasions. It surprised Mr. Rowland to see several pony carriages about, and to hear a noise of talk coming out into the garden all perfumed with sweet-peas and roses. He looked at the minister with an inquiring air.

"Oh, I don't call this society," said Mr. Dean, "though perhaps you will be of a different opinion," he added. He was a little supercilious in his tone to the railway man, who was a rich person and no more; not that the minister had any inclination to

break any tie that might be formed with "the House." He was not himself fond of tea-parties, and his expression had made it plain that dinners were chiefly to be found, if anywhere, at Rosmore.

"I have inveigled Mr. Rowland in for a cup of tea. I did not know you had guests."

"Dear me, Henry!" said Mrs. Dean; "of course you knew. It's my day : everybody in the parish knows, if you don't. But I am very glad to see Mr. Rowland : he has just come at the very nick of time. I was saying to Mrs. Wedderburn, so much depends on who is at the House."

"It is just the centre of everything," said a fat lady who was thus referred to. She gave Mr. Rowland a little bow, half rising from her chair. "We all defer to the House," she added with an ingratiating smile to which Rowland answered as best he could with a bow which was as deferential as hers was condescending. There were a dozen of people or more in the room, which was not very large, and hot with the fumes of tea. There were two or three matronly persons like Mrs. Wedderburn, and a few who were younger, and two men who were making themselves useful and handing the tea and the cake. There were also some queerly-dressed, middle-aged ladies, of the class to which Scotch society owes so much, the rural single woman, individual and strong-minded : and there were some with a great air of fashion and the consciousness of fine clothes. These last Rowland set down, and justly, as sea-bathers from Kilrossie. One of the others was the minister's wife from the next parish, also unmistakable. His name caused a little rustle of interest among them, as he made his bow all round.

"I'm sure you're very welcome among us," said another lady, rising up from the window where she sat. "Since we cannot have our dear Lady Jean, we're well content to have a tenant that is creditable and a well-known name. You are just new from India, and our climate will be a great change to ye, at least for the first."

"Oh, I am well accustomed to the climate," said Rowland. "I don't think that will trouble me much."

"You're really then a west-country man to begin with? so we've heard ; but Mrs. Rowland, I'm afraid, will not be so used to it. Nor perhaps your young folk. You'll think me bold," added his interrogator, "but we hear there are young folk?"

"My wife is not Scotch," said Rowland ; "but the difference between Rosmore and an English county is not so very great." He longed to say who she was—one of the oldest families—but the same pride which suggested this statement held him back.

"Oh," said the ladies, two or three together ; and then Mrs. Dean, bringing him his cup of tea, took up the parole.

"You'll soon learn the weakness of a country neighbourhood, Mr. Rowland. We never rest till we're at the bottom of every-

thing. We had heard it was a lady from India that was to be the mistress of 'the Hoose.'

And now his opportunity arrived. "I will give you all the information in my power," he said smiling. "My wife was a Miss Ferrars of Langley Ferrars, a very old family—Leicestershire people. She is a lady from India just as I am a man from India. We arrived about a fortnight ago. Is there anything else I can satisfy the ladies about?"

He knew of old that there was no such way of discomfiting the curious as to proclaim your own story, whatever it might be. And he had recovered his spirit, which Marion and Archie had subdued. Society at the station had endeavoured to keep him in his place, but in vain. Even the attachés and aides-de-camp had not been able to manage that. He was a little amused at the thought of this little rural tea-party questioning him, sitting upon his claims to be considered one of them.—One of them! His suppressed sense of the absurdity of this gave a gleam of mischief to his eyes, and quite restored him to his own self-opinion, which had been so rudely interfered with of late. He stood with his back to the fire-place, which, even when there is no fire, is a commanding attitude for a man, and regarded them all with a smile.

"We are all looking forward to calling," said fat Mrs. Wedderburn, who did not like the trouble of much talking, yet evidently felt that it lay with her to inaugurate every subject.

"That we are," said his other questioner, who was called Miss Eliza by the other ladies. "I'm just a very pushing person, and ye'll excuse me. Is it true, Mr. Rowland, what the folk say, that from a boy ye had set your heart on Rosmore House?"

"Quite true," he said promptly, "when I seemed to have as much chance of it as of the moon. They say there's nothing like boding of a golden gown—for you see there I am—"

"It's a wonderful encouragement to the young," said Miss Eliza. "The minister should put it into one of the papers he's aye writing. Did ye not know that our minister was a leeterary character? Oh, that he is! and a real prop to the constitution; for though he may not be always so in the pulpit, he's real sound in politics—that's what I always say."

"Miss Eliza," said the other clergyman, "you must not raise a *jama* about a reverend brother. We're all sound till we're proved otherwise, and Presbytery proceedings are against the spirit of the time."

"Oh," said Miss Eliza, "Mr. Dean knows well what I think. There's no man I like so well to hear, but his views are whiles very papistical. He would just like to be the bishop and more. He's no sound for Presbytery. He would like vestments and that kind of thing, and incense, perhaps, for anything I can tell. I would not wonder but he would put on a white surplice, if that is what they call it, if he could get one over his decent black gown."

"I was an Episcopalian before I married Mr. Wedderburn," said the fat lady. "I do not regret it, for Mr. Dean knows we are all uncommonly well pleased with him. And a surprise would become him very well."

"It's a very becoming thing," said another of the ladies. "We're very glad to come to hear Mr. Dean, but we're all Episcopalians when we're at home."

"It's the fashion," said Mrs. Wedderburn, folding her fat hands.

"I've no desire to enter into that question. I'm saying nothing but that the minister is no very sound on certain points. I've said it to his face, and he just laughs, as you see. But, bless me! this conversation has wandered far from where it began, for I was asking Mr. Rowland, in the interests of all the nieces and the nephews, whether he had not, as we've been informed, some young folk."

Rowland had dropped out of the talk a little, and had forgotten that he was being cross-examined. He woke up suddenly at this question with a start. The lingering smile disappeared from his mouth. He put up shutters at all his windows, so to speak. The light went out in his eyes. "Yes," he said in a voice which he felt to be as dull as his countenance was blank; "I have a son and a daughter."

"That was just what I heard," said Miss Eliza with triumph. "We have usually some young folk staying with us up at the Burn. My sister and me, we are overrun with nieces and nephews. It's just a plague. There is scarcely a boat but brings one at the least. I hope your two will come and see them. There is aye something going on; a game at that tennis, or whatever they call it, or a party on the water, or a climb up the hills. If they will just not stand upon ceremony, but come any day—"

"When they are here," said Rowland stolidly; "as yet they are not here. The house will not be ready for a week or more."

"Oh, I beg your pardon. We thought—there were so many waggons coming and going, and the dog-cart out at the pier."

"I hope you don't think," he said, "that I would take home my wife either in a waggon or a dog-cart?"

The ladies looked at each other, and there came a faint "oh!" that universal British interjection which answers to every emergency—from some unidentified person. But a sort of awe stole over the party. Who was this lady that could not be taken home in a dog-cart? Lady Jean had been driven from the pier in a dog-cart many and many a day. Did the woman who had married this foundry lad from Glesco, this railway man, that had made his fortune in India, did she think herself better than Lady Jean?

Mr. Rowland walked away through his own woods, much amused by this incident generally. They were not his own

woods : they were the Earl's woods, which was a reflection very unpleasant to him. If money could smooth over the difficulty, they should be his own woods still before he was done with them ; and in the meantime he had a long lease, and a strong determination to call them his own. He looked at every tree, and put a mental mark upon it, to prove to himself that he was right. There was a great silver fir, an unusually fine tree, near the gates, at which he paused, saying to himself, "This is not mine," with an assumption that all the rest were, which was strange in such a sensible man ; but his mind had a little twist in it so far as Rosmore was concerned. He smiled at the little society of the place with a sense of superiority, at which they would have been extremely indignant. The Miss Elizas of the peninsula were nothing to him, and their gracious intention of calling upon his wife, gave him such a feeling of the ridiculous, that he laughed aloud as he went on. Call upon Evelyn ! Mr. Rowland had perhaps as exaggerated an idea of Evelyn's claims as the village people had a humble one. They had heard that she was a governess whom he had picked up in India ; and he was of opinion that she was a very high-born lady, as good as the Queen. He chuckled to himself as he realized how she would look amid the ladies who came to Kilrossie for the sea-bathing, and the ladies of the parish : Miss Eliza with her big rusty hat and shawl, and the two ministers' wives. Evelyn with the look of a princess, and her beautiful dresses, that were like nothing else in the world, which her mere putting them on gave the air of royal robes to ! This was his way of looking at the matter, which probably would not have been at all the way of the county ladies, who had a general idea what was the fashion, though they did not take the trouble to adopt it. But to Mr. Rowland whatever Evelyn wore was the fashion, and it was she, he felt, who ought to be everybody's model, to dress after, as far as it was in vain flesh and blood to follow such an ideal. Lady Jean herself would be but a rural dowdy in presence of Evelyn. He thought of the impression she would make. The startled "Oh !" of wonder which would burst from all their lips when she was first seen. It would be something altogether new to them to see such a lady ! It restored him to his natural spirits and self-confidence to think of this ; indeed, his pride in his wife was the very apex of Rowland's self-esteem and proud sense of having acquired everything that man could hope to acquire, and all by his own exertions and good judgment. He reflected to himself with satisfaction that he had owed nothing to anybody ; that it was all his own doing, not only his success in life, *i.e.* the fortune he had made, but all those still more dazzling successes, which he could not have got had not the fortune been made. Nobody, for instance, had ever suggested Rosmore to him ; no benevolent teacher, or other guide of youth, had pointed out to him the house with the white colonnade as an inspiring object and stimulus to ambition. Himself alone

had been his counsellor. Nor had anybody indicated to him at the station the pale and graceful woman who was Mrs. Stanhope's dependent and poor friend. He had for himself found out and chosen both the wife and the house. This triumphant thought returning to his mind wiped out the impression of the morning, and even the recollection that he had gone out to hunt for society, and had—found it! He remembered this a little later with a sense that it was the best joke in the world. He had found it! Mrs. Dean had a "day," as if she lived in a novel or Mayfair; and the neighbouring gentry and the sea-bathers, when they came in force, elated her soul as if they had been all out of the peerage. He wondered, with a laugh to himself, what Evelyn would say to Miss Eliza and the fat Mrs. Wedderburn, and went back to Rosmore in high glee, really oblivious for a time of the two "difficulties," the irreconcilable portion of his new life, whom he had left there.

## CHAPTER XVI

To describe the blank which fell upon the successful man as he went briskly up through the woods, which in his heart he called his own, reflecting upon his success and how he had won it all unaided, his happy selection of a house, his still happier luck in a wife, and saw the pair of limp young figures without interest in anything, vaguely standing about in front of the colonnade, would be too much for words. They stood a little apart, Archie with his hands in his pockets, Marion drawing lines in the ground with the end of her parasol. They were not even looking at "the view." The air of caring for nothing, finding no interest in anything, was so strong in them both that they might have been taken as impersonations of ennui, that most hopeless of all the immoralities. They did not know what to do with themselves—they would never know what to do with themselves, Rowland thought in despair. They would stand about his life as they were doing about the vacant space in front of the house, empty, indifferent, uninterested. Going wrong, he said to himself (heaven forgive him!) was almost better than that—anything is better than nullity, the state of doing and being nothing. The outline of them against the light struck him as he came up to them like a dull blow.

"Well," he said, "what have you been doing since I saw you last?"

"Nothing," said Marion, with a slight look up at him, and a yawn, "for there is nothing to do."

"No—thing," said Archie with hesitation and a less assured, more anxious look. He wanted to speak to his father about those puppies, if he could only venture: but he did not dare.

"You might have explored the woods," said Rowland, "or

gone down to the loch, or taken a boat, or rambled up the hill—there's a hundred things to do."

"The woods are very damp : I would have spoiled my shoes : and the hills very craggy : it would have torn my frock : and Archie, he is too lazy to row a boat, and too grumpy to speak. Will it soon be time to go back to Glasgow ? You might have taken me with you, papa."

"It is a pity I did not : for there was company at the Manse, and I have an invitation for you."

"Oh, papa !"

Archie too looked up with a certain lightening of his pre-occupied face.

"Yes—if you are not too fine for it. It is to go to some place that is called the Burn, to a lady whose name is Miss Eliza, who has a number of nieces and nephews, and something always going on, tennis, or boating, or dancing."

"Oh, papa !" Marion's eyes shone ; but presently a little cloud came over her. "I have not had much chance of learning tennis. The MacColls can play, they've got a nice ground of their own—they have just everything ! But there's no club you can get into out of the Sauchiehall Road, and you want shoes and things. I never was in the way of learning." A little furtive moisture glistened in Marion's eyes.

"I could let you see the way," said Archie.

"Oh yes, laddies learn everything," said his sister with an offended air ; and then she perceived that she had been guilty of an unauthorized word. "I mean young gentlemen," she cried.

"For heaven's sake, whatever you mean, don't say that," said Rowland hastily. "However it is not a desert, as you thought : there is balm in Gilead. When you come back and settle down, you must make friends with Miss Eliza."

"Is she a lady, papa ? I would not, not for anything, make friends out of our own sphere."

Rowland laughed loud and long. He said, "I am glad you have such an exalted idea of your sphere ; but how about the MacColls ?"

"I am not meaning," said Marion, with dignity, "to keep up with the MacColls. They're just acquaintances, not to call friends. They never even ask me to their grandest parties. If they were friends, they would have let me learn tennis and all that. I have always meant to let them know that when my papa came home, they were not good enough for me."

"Well—perhaps it's legitimate—if they thought you not good enough for their grand parties, and no question of friendship in the matter. But you, Archie, you've got some friends ?"

"Yes," said the lad with hesitation. He had no friend whom he would not have sacrificed on the altar of the puppies. "There are some of the students—but I perhaps will have little chance of seeing them after—"

"If you please," said Sandy, the groom, who had been loitering near, "will I put in the horse? for yonder's the steamer leaving the loch head, and she'll sune be here."

"Never mind the horse: we'll walk," said Rowland, at which Marion gave him a look of wonder and reproach. Walk! a dog-cart was not much, but it was always a more dignified thing than to think a young lady like herself capable of walking like a common person to the pier.

"And, sir," said Sandy, "about the little dougs—Rankin would be glad to know."

"The little dougs?"

"The young gentleman will have tell't ye. It's Rankin's little dougs that are kent for a grand breed—and there's aye somebody wanting them. He would like to ken one way or another afore the young gentleman goes away."

"It's some little terriers," said Archie, coming forward a step, "we were looking at them. They're very bonnie little beasts. I thought that maybe—there would be watch-dogs wanted about the house—or—just for the fun of them—they're—fine little things. I—I—thought it might be—a good thing."

Rowland looked severely at his son as he stammered and hesitated. He replied coldly, "If you want the dogs, I suppose that is enough." He waved his hand to Sandy, dismissing him. "Now, Marion, are you ready for your walk?"

Marion pouted and protested that she was sure she could not walk so far, but Rowland was inflexible. "It will be something to do," he said grimly. And with a troubled countenance and trembling limbs Archie followed.

A more beautiful walk could scarcely have been conceived. Here and there, as they descended the hill, they came out upon an open space where the lovely loch, with the great range of hills at the head lying full in the western sun, stretched out before them. Its surface glistened with gleams of reflection, repeating everything from the white scattered houses on its banks to the whiter clouds that floated on the surface of the sky. A boat or two, between the dazzling atmosphere above and the still more dazzling reflection below, lay like a thing beatified. Woods and hills and shining water—there was nothing wanting to the perfection of the scene. "Every prospect pleases, and only man is vile;" and troubled—troubled, full of care—wanting for something wherever he is.

The successful man marched along with his head high, his pretty little daughter running with her short steps by his side, the house of his choice behind him, the wife of his choice awaiting him, and so well off, able to do whatever he pleased, the admiring, curious people said. Whatever he pleased! yes, to buy furniture of the rarest description, horses and carriages, even Rosmore itself, if he could by any means procure that it should be brought to market; but not with all his wealth able to expand the little vulgar nature of the girl, or open the

disturbed heart of the boy beside him. Poor rich man! to whom his wealth could give no pleasure while this constant irritation gnawed at his heart.

He took them back to Sauchiehall Road, not exhilarated by their day's outing; and while Marion recovered her fatigue and began really to enjoy Rosmore in describing its grandeur to her aunt, he took Archie aside for a few brief words. "What was that about the dogs?" he said. "Did you pay for them, or have they to be paid for, or what did the groom mean? I won't have any familiarity with the grooms. Why should I be consulted as if you couldn't settle such a matter for yourself?"

"I never wanted you to be consulted," said the boy, retiring within himself.

"What did it mean then? Remember I consider you old enough to take the responsibility of your own actions. If you want anything, get it: if I don't approve, I'll let you know my opinion. If I find you spending too much, I'll put a stop to it. But I am not to be consulted about every trifle as if you were a child."

Archie was so struck with the irony of this address as applied to himself, that his wounded feelings and strained temper burst out into a harsh laugh. "As for spending," he said, "much or little, you may set your mind at rest, for I've nothing to spend."

Rowland took out his pocket-book with a look of doubt, glancing from Archie to Mrs. Brown. "You must have your allowance of course," he said. "You've had it, I suppose, for years past?"

"A shilling a week or sometimes half-a-crown," said Archie, prolonging the laugh which was the only witness of emotion his boyish pride and shyness permitted him to indulge in. "But I'm not asking you for money," he said harshly. The puppies flitted in vision before his eyes, and counselled a softer tone, but he could not, in spite of the puppies, put forward a finger to touch the crisp piece of paper which his father held out to him.

"I'll see about that," said Rowland. "Here, in the meantime."

"I am not wanting your money."

"You young ass! take what I give you. I'll see that you have at your command in future, a proper sum.—Here!" Rowland, who was much out of temper too, flung the note at the boy, who let it drop upon the floor. "And try to behave like a gentleman," he said, exasperated, "and not like a sullen dog, as you're doing now."

He did not mean to be so severe. He was tired and sick of it all, as he said to himself as he hurried away. The boy was not true, he was not genuine, not frank nor open. The father was very angry, disappointed: yet in the dark, as he walked back to the hotel, there gleamed somehow upon him, he did not know

how, a reflection, a gleam from poor Mary's blue eyes, that had so long been hidden in the grave.

Meanwhile, the party in Mrs. Brown's parlour had been disturbed by a sense of something sulphurous in the air, and by the flutter of the piece of paper which had been thrown at Archie like a blow. All demand for explanation or possibility of interference had been stopped by the rapid leave-taking and departure of Rowland. "Are you not going to stay to your supper? and me prepared the table for you, and everything ready!" Mrs. Brown had said in great disappointment and dismay; but Rowland had not yielded. He had letters to write, he said, that unanswerable reason for everything. When the sound of his quick steps had died out upon the pavement, Mrs. Brown came back with a blank countenance into the parlour, where Archie still sat with the bit of white crisp paper at his feet.

"There's been some quarrel atween you," she said. "Tell me no lees: you've been setting up your face to your father, that's just a gentleman and far above ye, as ye whiles do to me."

"I tell no lies," said the boy.

"That means ye just acknowledge to it, ye thrawn, vexatious callant? What's that bit of paper lying at your feet?"

"It's of no consequence," said Archie.

"But it is of consequence when I say so. Give it to me!"

"I will not touch it," said the boy.

"Then I'll touch it!" She stooped suddenly with a nimbleness for which Archie was unprepared and snatched the paper.

Then she gave a loud scream. "Preserve us a'! It's nae less than a twenty-pound note. Lord, laddie, what did you say to him that he's given you a twenty-pound note!"

"Give me the note!" said Archie hoarsely, holding out his hand.

"Atweel and I'll do nothing of the kind. What was it for? Twenty pound! to the like of you that never had twenty pence! Archie Rowland, what is the meaning of this? It's a thing I will not put up with to have notes ("nots" Mrs. Brown called them) lying about my carpet and naebody condescending to lift them up."

"Let him be, aunty," said Marion; "he's in one of his ill keys; he was real disagreeable to-day, and would do nothing. I have had just a very dismal day because he would never rouse himself up."

"He may rouse himself or not as he likes," said Jean; "but I've gotten possession of the not, and I'll just keep it till I find out what it's for."

"It's my note," said Archie.

"And ye leave it lying at your feet! Twenty pounds! that would put pith into many a man's arm, and courage in his heart. Besides, what would ye do with all that siller? I'll give

ye a shilling or twa, and I'll just put it by. Your father must be clean gyte to put the like o' that in the power of a callant like you.—Come ben to your supper. I'll wager ye havena had a decent bite nor sup the haill day."

"I'm wanting no supper. I'm wanting my note," Archie said.

"Ye can have the one but no the other. The table's a' set and ready. Come in, ye fool, and take your supper. We'll no wait for you, neither Mey nor me."

Archie sat by himself with his head in his hands for some moments after they had gone away. Mrs. Brown had carried the lamp with her, but it was not dark. The days are long in June, and the soft visionary light, which was neither night nor day, came through the bars of the Venetian blinds, making the little shabby room faintly visible. He was tired, he was even hungry, but he would not stoop to the degradation of owning it, now that he had said he would have no supper. This added to the general sum of wretchedness in Archie's mind. It had all ended so miserably, the day which began so well. He was aware that he had been a fool. He had been tempted with the puppies—which even now, when he thought of them, tempted him still, filling him with a sort of forlorn pleasure in the recollection, and making him feel how silly it was to have let his "not" be taken from him—though he knew he had no money to pay for them. And then he had not had the courage to tell his father that he wanted them. Surely he who had bought May so many things would have given this little gratification to Archie, had he gone rightly about it. But he had been a fool. What was he always but a fool? He had got himself into several scrapes because he had not had the courage to ask anything from Aunty Jean. And now when he had gotten the opportunity—the note that was his own, that nobody else had any right to, to think that he had let that be taken out of his hand! He would never get a penny of it, Archie knew; yes, a shilling perhaps, or maybe half-a-crown, like a little bairn. And what good were they to him, when he had twenty pounds—twenty whole pounds of his own—to get the little dogs with, and many another luxury besides, and pay up his subscriptions to his clubs, which were always in arrears, and maybe treat some of the lads to a dinner without having to account for every penny? But he had let it be taken from him, and farewell to the doggies and everything else that was pleasant. Oh what a fool he was, what a fool! He went up to his room, and tumbled as he was upon his bed, in his best clothes, though he was hungry, and smelt the supper, and wanted it, with all his vigorous young appetite. Happily for Archie, in this painful complication of circumstances, it was not very long before he fell asleep.

Next morning Mrs. Brown received Rowland in the parlour above. "I am wanting to speak to you, Jims," she said, "you're no used to the charge of young folk, and I maun speak out my

mind. Ye mayna take it well of me, but at any rate I will have delivered my soul."

"Well," said Rowland, "I hope that will be for your comfort, however little it may be for mine."

"It will be for baith our goods, if ye will take my advice. Jims, what was that you threw at Archie last night before you went away!"

"Did I throw it at him? That was a curious thing to do; but I don't suppose it was intentional on my part."

"What was it, Jims? Answer me that."

"And may I ask what it matters to you, whatever it was?"

"It matters a great deal to me. I have been like a mother to him, and I'll no have the laddie to be led away. I know very well what it was. It was an English note, and I've got it here. Eh, Jims Rowland, knowing the world as ye must know it, how daur ye put the means of evil in that boy's innocent hands!"

"This is very strange," said Rowland, "to be brought to book because I give my son a little money."

"Do ye ca' twenty pounds a little money! My patience! a sma' fortune," said Mrs. Brown.

"My dear Jean, this is one of the things, unfortunately, that we have made a great mistake about. My boy should have been accustomed to a little freedom, a little money of his own. It is all very unfortunate. He will be plunged into spending money when he is quite unacquainted with the use of it. It is the very worst thing."

"And that's a' my faut ye'll be thinking," said Jean, grimly.

"I don't say it is your fault. It is my fault as much as yours. I thought of securing them kindness and motherly care. I should have remembered there was something more necessary. You have been very kind to them, Jean."

"Kind!" the good woman flushed with a high angry colour: "kind! that's a bonny word to use to me. A stranger's kind that says a pleasant word. The first person in the street that's taken with their winnin' ways is kind, if you please. But me! that has given them a' the love of my heart, that has been a mother to them and mair—!"

"I beg your pardon," said Rowland, "I am very much obliged to you: I know you have been all that."

"A mother, and mair," said Mrs. Jean. "No mony mothers would have done for them what I've done, watching every step they took, that ye might find them good bairns, no spendthrifts, nor wasters of your substance, but knowing the value of money, and using their discretion. I've given him the siller for his clubs and things, for I'm told that's the fashion nowadays, and he's aye had a shilling in his pouch for an occasion. If he had been my own I would never have held him with half as tight a hand, for he would have been making his week's wages if he had been a son of mine, and wouldna have been depending upon either you or me."

"That's just the pity of it," said Rowland. "He has fallen between two stools, neither a working lad nor a gentleman's son. That proves, Jean, we have both been in the wrong, and I more than you, for I should have known better. We have made a terrible mistake."

"I've made nae mistake," said Mrs. Brown. The tears were near which would soon choke her voice, and she spoke quickly to get out as much as she could before the storm came. "You may be in the wrang, Maister Rowland, but I'm no in the wrang. I've just acted on principle from beginning to end, to save him from the temptation of riches. They're a great temptation. If he had been learned to dash his way about like young MacColl, or the most of the lads that have had a father before them, what would ye have said to me? You will see that laddie dashing about a' Glesco in his phaeton, or whatever ye ca't; and his grandmother was just a howdie in the High Street, nae mair. Would ye have likit that, Jims Rowland? folk saying 'set a beggar on horseback,' and a' the rest, to a son of yours, and calling to mind the stock he came of, that was just working folk, though aye respectable. I'm no the one to bring up a lad to that. If ye had wanted him made a prodigal o', ye should have pit him in other hands. I've just keeped him in his right place. And ye tell me it's a mistake, and my fault and terrible wrong. Lord forgive ye, Jims Rowland! How dare ye say it's a mistake to me, that has been a mother to them—and mair!"

Rowland, like other men, was made very uncomfortable by the sight of the woman crying, but he held his ground. "I am very sorry to seem ungrateful, Jean. I am not ungrateful. You've given them a happy childhood, which is everything. But we must try a different system now. I can't have a young man stumbling and stammering before me, as if he had something on his conscience. I am not going to watch every step he takes. He must learn to take steps on his own account, and understand that he's a responsible creature. If you have taken his money from him——"

Mrs. Brown jumped up as if she had received a blow. She rushed to the door of the room, which she flung open, calling upon "Archie! Archie!" in a voice broken by angry sobs. The lad came stumbling down-stairs not knowing what was wrong, and appeared with his still somewhat sullen face, asking "What's the matter?" in a tone which was half alarmed and half defiant. She seized him by the arm and dragged him into the room, then flying to a little desk, opened it, flinging back the lid, and seizing the unfortunate bit of paper, flung it again in Archie's face. "Hae!" she said, "there it's till ye. Me taken his money? Me that have just done everything for them, and never thought of mysel'. Me! taken his money!" Mrs. Brown's voice rose to a shriek, and then she fell into a chair and burst into a more renewed and violent passion of tears.

"What have ye been saying to her to make her like that?" said Archie, turning to his father. "I was not wanting your money, and if she put it away it was no harm. Her take your money! She cares nothing for money but to get things for May and me. Aunty," he said, going up to her, putting his hand on her shoulder, "I'll just put a notice in the *Herald* to-morrow. If he is my father, I'll not be dependent upon him. What right has he to fling his dirty money in a man's face, and come into this house like a wild beast and make you cry. He made his money himself, and he can spend it himself. I'll make what I want for myself."

But oh the puppies, barking with their ridiculous noses in his hand, sprawling over old Rankin's bed! They suddenly came before Archie's mental vision, and made his voice waver. No such luxuries as Rankin's puppies could be in the lot of a poor young clerk in an office, making perhaps a pound a week—and he the great railway man's son that was rolling in wealth!—a sense of the great injustice of it made Archie's voice harsh. Who should all that money be for but for him? And the rich father, the hoped-for incarnation of wealth, was there scolding about a miserable note, accusing Aunty Jean of having taken the money! The lad went and stood at the back of her chair, putting himself on her side, defying the other who thought so much of his filthy siller! Let him keep his siller! he had made it himself and he could spend it on himself. Archie for his part would do the same. But as he uttered these noble sentiments, an almost overwhelming sense of the wickedness of it, of the cruelty of the unjust father, and of the unimaginable wrong to himself flooded Archie's mind. He could have cried too with anger and the intolerable sense of wrong.

Rowland stood for a minute or two contemplating the scene, and then he burst into a laugh. The climax was too ridiculous, he said to himself, for any serious feeling. And yet it was not a pleasant climax to come to, after so many years.

## CHAPTER XVII

THE husband and wife met with perhaps a greater sense of satisfaction and pleasure than either had anticipated feeling when they parted. Marriage is a curious thing, notwithstanding all the ill that is said of it. They had not been long married; they had not been exactly what people call in love with each other; nor was James Rowland at all a sentimental person. Yet there is something in that old-fashioned expression which speaks of making two persons one flesh, which has a most powerful influence. They meet as people only can meet whose interests are one, who are fain to confide everything that affects

them to the bosom of the other, who is theirself. The thing is indescribable ; it is simple as *a b c* to those who have experienced it. It would probably be impossible without the other circumstances of the union, yet it is superior to all the rest—the most essential, the most noble. Both these persons had been disturbed and troubled by various matters peculiar to themselves; Rowland by the problem of his children, Evelyn by other problems not unlike, yet so different from his. When they met, there seemed an instant lull in these disturbances. The twofold being was now complete, and was able to deal with all problems.

Rowland had travelled by night, as busy men so often get the habit of doing, and Evelyn superintended the excellent breakfast he always made, and looked on at the satisfaction of that admirable appetite with much complacency, before she asked any questions. She was not a woman who was fond of asking questions. She awaited confidences, and did not press them ; which is a very good way for those who can do it, but not perhaps very easy to an anxious mind. The difference of her position from that of a mother was, that she was interested without being anxious, and this made her also more charitable in judging, and probably would make her less hard upon the shortcomings of the children. She was very much interested, but she was calm, and it was not to her a question of life and death. It was not till he had eaten the very last spoonful of marmalade and piece of roll, of which he was capable, that she said “Well ?” looking with a smile into his eyes.

“ Well—,” he said with satisfaction, pushing back his seat from the table, “ you’re ready to hear all about my troubles, Evelyn ?”

“ I hope they are not very bad troubles.”

“ That will be very much as you take them, my dear. They might be bad enough, but I’ve great confidence in my wife. In the first place, the house is, I think, perfection ; but you may not agree with me—you know I have not your refinement. It stands on a green knoll overlooking the Clyde, with a background of the most beautiful hills in the world, and for the foreground the grand Firth—and all the wealth and life that pass over it—— But,” he said pausing, and with a half-shame-faced laugh, “ I’ve told you all that before.”

“ Yes, you have told me before ; but that does not take away my interest. Tell me more.”

He took her hand with a grateful pressure, and so began to tell her about the arrangement of the house, and other matters on which she was not informed before, to all of which she listened with much grace and satisfaction, nodding her head as one thing was reported to her after another. I do not say that Mrs. Rowland did not exercise a natural privilege, and suspend her judgment on one or two points. It was only natural that she should know better what the internal arrangements of a great house should be than he did. But she received it all as if in

every way he had done well ; which was the case so far as she yet knew. "There is one thing, however, I must tell you of, Evelyn," he said, "and your feeling about that will of course make all the difference. You may not feel inclined to put up with it. And in that case it matters very little about anything else. It is you that must be the judge."

"What is this great thing ?" she said with a smile.

"It is a great thing, my dear. I dare say even I might not like it, though, having your society, I'm very indifferent. It is that I'm afraid there is very little society at Rosmore."

She burst out into a pleasant laugh. "Society—is that all ? Dear James, I thought you were going to say there was no good water, or that the drainage was bad, or something of that sort."

"We'd soon have managed that," he said, laughing too with relief, "sunk a well or turned the whole place upside down ; that would have presented no difficulty. I cannot tell you what a relief it is to me that you take it so easily, Evelyn. It was—it was—Marion who put it into my head. She said, 'There will be nobody that mamma will like to associate with here.' That was all her own doing—not suggested in any way by me : for I did not know whether you would like it, if a little girl you never saw before called you, right out—"

"Like it !" said Evelyn—Perhaps, to tell the truth, she had winced a little. "Of course I should like it. It shows an inclination to adopt me, which is the very best thing I could have hoped for. Tell me about her, James. The house is very interesting, but the children are more interesting than the house."

"You take a load off my mind when you say so. I would give a thousand pounds that the first was over—that you had met them and made acquaintance with them. She's eighteen, and he's twenty. The boy is rather a cub—and the girl—"

"My dear James ! it's very likely they are not made up exactly to your taste : how could they be ? They are very young, and it will be quite exciting to put them a little into shape—into our shape. Society, indeed !—Society, whatever it was, would not be nearly so interesting as that. Tell me everything about them, James."

Encouraged by this, Mr. Rowland began to tell her his experiences with the children ; but by some means it came about that, he could not tell how, their faults got slurred over, and their good qualities magnified in his hand. How did it happen ? He could not tell. He had Marion's impudent little *minois* before him every word he said, yet he managed to give an inoffensive saucy look to Marion—a saucy look which fathers do not dislike, though mothers may object to it. And then the boy—

"Archie disarms me," he said, "because I can't help seeing in him his mother's eyes. I'm afraid he's a dour fellow and sullen,

and you can't be expected to be mollified as I am. It takes away my anger when I look at him. And yet I had cause to be angry."

"Tell me," she said.

And then Mr. Rowland told the story, beginning at the apparition of the groom with his question about the dougs, and ending with Archie's defence of his aunt, who had taken his money from him, against the father who had given it. As he told this, it seemed to himself less bad as an indictment against Archie than he had supposed. What was it, after all, that the boy had done? The enormity disappeared as it was put into words. And Evelyn sat smiling, from time to time shaking her head.

"It appears to me," she said, "that if Archie was wrong, as no doubt he was, Archie's father was also a little to blame."

"Do you think so?" he said eagerly. He was glad to think that perhaps this might be so.

"You would not like him to be disloyal, nor for twenty bank-notes? He might have swallowed the injury to himself of having that money flung in his face—"

"Injury!"—Mr. Rowland's countenance fell.

She put her hand upon his, smiling—"Yes, Sir Stern Father. That's not your rôle, James: you were born to be a most indulgent father, giving in to them in everything. And you must henceforward take up your right rôle, and let me be the repressive influence."

He took her hands between both his. It was not a very strong support, so far as physical force went, and yet for the first time James Rowland felt their soft fingers close upon his in a way that expressed not their usual soft gentleness, but strength. He felt himself suddenly holding on to that hand as if it were his sheet-anchor, which indeed it was.

"To tell the truth," he said, "I think perhaps I looked at them through what I suppose were your eyes, Evelyn, seeing how unlike they were to you, how little worthy to live with you, to have the rank of your children. It was that, at all events, made me hard upon poor little May. It's not her fault if she is more like Jean Brown than she is like a lady, or anything that had even been near you."

"Whom should she be like but the person who has brought her up? I am delighted to hear that they are so loyal. I would not have that changed for anything in the world."

"I am not so sure about their loyalty," said Rowland, recalling to mind Marion's strict impartiality in respect to her aunt, and detachment from her. But he felt sure that Evelyn would be able to explain that away also; and put his foot upon it. No need to make the child out worse than she was; and a rush of paternal kindness came over him now that the two were out of his sight. It was not their fault. He said, "I don't doubt you'll do wonders with Marion, my dear. The little thing is very quick. Even in the day or two I was with them, a change came over her.

She kept her eye upon me, and without a word just adopted manners. No, I don't think I am partial. Indeed I found that I was quite the reverse."

I am afraid that a cold shudder, unsuspected by her husband, passed over Evelyn, in which, if there was horror, there was also a distinctly comic element. What sort of a wonderful creature must the girl be who "adopted manners" from good James, the most excellent man, but not a model of refinement. She could not but laugh, yet shivered a little as well.

"I am more afraid of Marion than of Archie," she said, "for he will chiefly be your concern. I shall have only the consoling part, the petting, to do with him. I hope your little May is a magnanimous little person, who will not mind being pulled to pieces for her good; for I suppose I shall have to do that—if you are right."

She added these last words with a little quick awakening to possible danger. He had not been at all complimentary to his little girl. Yet was it possible that there was a faint little cloud, a suspicion of a cloud on his face, to be taken at his word, and to have even his wife express, nay repeat what was his own opinion? She was very quick to see these almost imperceptible changes of countenance, and with a little start and catching of her breath, awoke to a sense of risk, which she had never realized before.

"I have a story of my own to tell you," she said hastily, "in which I shall have to crave a great deal of forbearance on your part, James, and pardon for what I have taken upon myself to do, or rather to consent to. I thought of asking your permission first, but then I felt that anything of this kind might seem a want of confidence in you."

His face had changed in a moment to the widest of smiles, and brightest of aspects. "Fancy!" he said, "anything for which you should have to ask my permission, any wish of yours that it would not be my highest pleasure to do."

"Thank you," she said, "dear. I felt sure you would back me up: and now I have got this pretty speech to the boot, to make me happy. James, do you remember a story I told you when you first spoke to me, when you asked me first, in Helen Stanhope's house?"

"About?"—He paused and added, "Yes: you have seen him again?"

"I have seen a man paralyzed, in a Bath-chair, moved, dressed, fed, ordered about by a servant. The ghost, or far worse than the ghost, the wreck of a man."

"And that was he?" A certain gleam—was it of satisfaction? —was for a moment in James Rowland's eyes. But it was only for a moment, and the next they were subdued by the most genuine sympathy. "My poor dear!" he said.

"It was a great shock to see him, you may suppose: but that is a small matter. He has two children, like ourselves."

The light sprang up in his eyes, and he thanked her with a sudden kiss upon her hand.

"A boy and a girl, about the same ages. The girl I have seen—a strange specimen to me of a new generation I have no knowledge of; the boy, I fear, a very careless boy. Of all things in the world it has occurred to Mr. Saumarez, of all people in the world, to desire to confide these children to me."

"It shows that he has more sense than I could have thought."

"Their mother, of course, is dead, and he thinks he will die soon. I hear from others that how he lives at all is a wonder, though they think him likely to go on living; but he wishes me to take the guardianship of his children—"

"And you have accepted?"

"No, I have not accepted. That was too much to do, without your approval at least: even with it I doubt if I could take such a responsibility. It is not so bad as that. But I have pledged myself to ask them to Rosmore, for a long visit, to make their acquaintance thoroughly. They are young people who are, according to their slang, up to everything. I have been in great doubt since, whether it would be a good thing for—our two."

James Rowland's eyes flashed again. After all there are some things which the experiences of a lifetime cannot do away with. As a point of fact, he knew well enough that the higher classes as he had seen them, chiefly in India, were fundamentally not a bit superior to the lower classes as he knew them by more intimate experience; and yet, risen from the ranks as he was, it gave him the strangest sensation of pleasure to hear that two young aristocrats, children of Society, "up to everything," were about to become his guests. Even the flavour of something a little wrong which was conveyed in these words, rather heightened than diminished the pleasure. A good thing for—our two. Surely it would be a good thing: it would teach them manners far more effectually than if they were to observe their father's ways to the end of the chapter. It would smarten up Archie, and let him see what a young man should look like in his new sphere.

"My dear," he said, "if that is all you are in doubt about, I think you may set your mind at rest. Two young people who are up to everything, will probably find it very dull at Rosmore; but so far as we are concerned, and the two—it can be nothing but an advantage. Ask as many people as you like: there is plenty of room in the house, and there will be plenty of carriages and horses, and plenty of things to see, though there is nothing to do, as Archie says."

"That is a very advanced thing for Archie to say: it is the fashionable complaint."

"Is it?" said Rowland, brightening more and more. He began to think that perhaps he had been too severe upon the young people, that his anxiety had made him see blemishes which perhaps did not exist. It was quite possible that well-made

clothes, and a little money in his pocket, would make entirely a different figure of Archie ; and little May—well perhaps little May wanted still less. She was as sharp as a needle. She would pick up everything without letting it be seen that she did not know it to begin with. The thought flashed through his mind that in a week she would have made herself an exact copy of Evelyn, and what could a girl do better than that ? Marion was not like her own mother at all ; she had not those eyes which gave Archie, though he did not know it, so much power. But she was very clever : she could make herself whatever she wanted to be.

The Rowlands had a great deal before them in the few days which they were to spend in London, before going, as Mr. Rowland proudly said, home. There were a great many things still to buy, which could be got only in town, though the Glasgow people had been indignantly sure that nothing was to be had in London (to call London *town*, was an arrogance which was not to be endured) which could not be much better procured in Glasgow. Rowland, however, was precisely the man to be of a contrary opinion, and he had a list as long as his arm of things that were still wanted. Plate, for one inconsiderable item, and carriages on which Evelyn's judgment was necessary, and for which orders had to be given at once. He approved of her purchases, but thought them far too few and unimportant. "I believe you are afraid of spending money," he said, with a long rich laugh. This rich laugh of contempt at all small economies and insignificant expenditure is offensive in many people, but it was not offensive in James Rowland—perhaps, indeed, to the wives of the millionaires, who are thus allowed *carte blanche*, and egged on in the way of pleasant extravagance, it is never offensive. Evelyn entered into the joke of being niggardly, of spending too little. "As if there was not enough to come and go upon," he said, with perfect satisfaction. When any one was by, especially any one who was not rich, who could not afford these liberalities, she might blush a little and restrain with a look, or a touch upon his arm, the large utterances of her good man ; but when they were alone, she did not find it offensive. She went with him from one shop to another, quite pleased with herself and him. He was really a satisfactory person to go shopping with. He found nothing too costly so long as it was good, and threw over cheap things with a fine contempt that was refreshing to behold, especially to one who for a long time had been obliged to take cheapness much into consideration. One day he took her into Christie's, and bade her look if there was anything good enough for her boudoir at home, and stood by smiling with pride in his wife's taste and superior knowledge, while she was inspecting those treasures which he declared he did not understand. But he did understand bric-a-brac, it turned out, much better than Evelyn did, though perhaps his taste in pictures was not so pure.

Thus the days passed by ; and though those pleasures depended very much on the depth of Mr. Rowland's purse, they could scarcely be called vulgar pleasures, although Evelyn sometimes at the end of the day blushed to think how she had enjoyed herself. Was it the fact of spending money, an operation which in itself seemed to give pleasure to her husband, or was it the acquisition of so many valuable and beautiful things which was delightful ? It was complicated, as everything human is, with the contrast of previous life, with the pleasure of pleasing him by being pleased herself, even perhaps a little by the obsequious respect by which their progress was attended. This was a poor view, and we are poor creatures, the best of us—for there was something even in that. As for the purchases themselves, Evelyn knew that a cracked pot, a scrap of an old picture, a bit of clumsy carving, was capable of giving quite as much pleasure as all the treasures of art which accumulated in their rooms at the hotel. Happily there is compensation in all things, and the highest of all delights, in bric-a-brac at least, is not to him who buys whatever strikes his fancy, regardless of expenses, but to him who "picks up" an unexpected gem, for a few pence or shillings, in some ignoble corner where no such treasure could be suspected to be.

And they dined out in the evenings, at the Leightons, of course, and at other places, where the great railway man found himself a sort of lion, to his great astonishment, where he expected modestly to be received, chiefly on his wife's account, in spheres which were not his. In this point of view Mr. Rowland was delighted, and Evelyn was as proud of her husband as he could be of her, which was saying a great deal. Like many other people in this world, Rowland was not in the least vain of the real work he had done. He was aware that he had been very lucky in many things, in the means he had employed, in the curious natural facilities which always came in his way ; but his own skill and patience and thought did not seem to come into his mind as deserving of special distinction. "Oh, of course, since it was my business, I tried to do it the best I could," he said, as if that were the most natural thing in the world. It was his assistants who were the wonderful fellows ; he was so fortunate in always getting hold of the best men ; no man but had been true to him, as Brutus says. Evelyn sat by and listened with such light in her eyes that her friend, Lady Leighton, looked at her in wonder. "Why, you are in love with him?" said that woman of the world.

There was one meeting, however, in which Evelyn's feelings were exercised in a more complicated and difficult way. She had kept safe from all encounter with Saumarez, whose invalid chair she had seen repeatedly in the distance with a sense of an escape, until the very last day, which Rowland had insisted upon devoting to amusement alone. "Why shouldn't we begin with this 'Row' which I hear everybody speaking of ?"

"Oh, it is too early for the Row."

"Never mind ; it seems to be pretty, and to have pretty people about it. I want to sit down on a chair and look at them."

"As if you were a man to sit long quiet on a chair!"

"Come along, Evelyn. I believe you're jealous of the pretty girls," he said with his big laugh. How well she had known how it would be! Saumarez had no objection at any time to be seen of the crowd. He had grown to feel his helplessness a distinction, as he would have felt anything else that belonged to him. But his time for his promenade was before the fashionable hour, and the Rowlands had not gone half the way along before the well-known chair became visible slowly approaching. Evelyn gripped her husband's arm.

"James, I see an invalid chair there in front of us, with three ladies standing round it. I rather think it must be Mr. Saumarez. He is sure to see us ; he will ask to be introduced to you."

"Well, my dear : if you would rather not, let's turn back ; otherwise, it makes no difference to me. Yes, I might almost say I have a kind of curiosity—but not if it troubles you."

"How should it trouble me?" said Evelyn. But yet it did, though there was no reason for it. What was her reason ? A half vexation that her husband should see him so humiliated, so helpless and pitiful a spectacle ; a half terror to see her husband reflected through his eyes. But there was no help for it now.

"Make me acquainted with Mr. Rowland, my dear lady," Saumarez said. "I have wanted to make his acquaintance ever since I heard—how lucky a man he was."

"You may say that," said Rowland heartily, "the luckiest man, I think, in the whole world."

"You say so," said the invalid, "to the man who can perhaps best understand you in the whole world, being the unluckiest man in it, I should think ; a failure in everything beside you, who are a success in everything. You must let me congratulate you, as one of your wife's earliest friends. I am just sufficiently older than she is to have held her in my arms as an infant."

"For heaven's sake, none of that!" Evelyn exclaimed under her breath, with a flash of overpowering offence. He eyed her with a smile in those two brilliant eyes.

"To have petted her as a little girl, to have—admired her as a woman : nobody can know so well as I what a prize you have got, Mr. Rowland."

James was a little surprised, and slightly, faintly disturbed. "I hope I know that," he said, "and my great good fortune."

"And I hope," said Evelyn, "that I am not considered likely to enjoy all this, listening to those mutual compliments. I, for my part, am fully alive to my own good fortune. James, I think we must go on. We have to be at Madeline's."

"Madeline," said Saumarez with a laugh, "is always Mrs.

Rowland's excuse. She is constantly going to Madeline's if one tries to detain her for a moment. But you must wait till I tell you how kind she has been to my children. It cannot but do a young girl good to be in Mrs. Rowland's society ; and I am doubly grateful for my motherless Rose. I hear you've got Lord Clydesdale's place at Rosmore."

Mr. Rowland did not like to hear it called Lord Clydesdale's place. "Until the moment when we can get him to sell it to us," he said.

"Ah, will he sell ? That's a different matter. A rich tenant paying a good rent, that's one thing—but Clydesdale won't sell. I hope you are not calculating upon that."

"We shall see," said Rowland, not well pleased.

"Yes, we shall see. And must you really go—to Madeline ? Lay me at her ladyship's feet. I will go and give her ladyship my opinion of—things in general, one day very soon."

"My dear," said Mr. Rowland to his wife, "I don't think much of that—old friend of yours. Cripple or no cripple, he's got a devil in his eye."

"You cannot think less of him than I do, James," said Evelyn, holding fast by her husband's arm. She knew very well what he had meant when he had said he would give Madeline his opinion on—things in general ; and she knew what barbed arrow he had intended to place in her heart when he spoke of holding her in his arms as an infant. To think that she should have been in that man's arms a happy girl, considering herself happy in his love ! She shuddered as the thought passed through her mind.

"Are you cold, Evelyn ?" Rowland said with surprise.

"Only with the moral cold that is in that man's horrible atmosphere," she said.

## CHAPTER XVIII

"YES, he is rather a dreadful spectacle," said Lady Leighton. "Now, one wonders he likes to exhibit himself about the world, where he once was so well known in another way. There's nothing so strange as human vanity, Mr. Rowland. I think he rather likes to show as a sort of prize example of suffering and misery. It's a distinction in its way. He had the distinction of being one of the handsomest men of his day, and of behaving more badly than almost anybody else, and now he's the most deplorable sufferer—always the first, you know, whatever he's at."

"You are a little hard upon him, Lady Leighton."

"Not a bit too hard. I know the man so well. We've always been very good friends—"

"What ! Though he behaved more badly than almost any-

body else?" Rowland said, with a laugh. Evelyn, who, knowing what her friend meant, and still smarting as she was from the previous encounter, felt it almost as an added injury, looked on with the gravest face, feeling herself unable to speak.

"Well!—you don't know society as I do. You've spent your life in primitive countries, where men fly at each other's throats when they disapprove of each other. We don't do that here. We carry on our relations all the same. Sometimes, however, we speak very plainly, I am glad to say. Ned Saumarez knows exactly what I think of him, but he comes to see me as if we were the dearest of friends."

"I don't understand society," said Rowland, "and I don't think I should ever know that part of it. How is anybody to know which you prefer, the good or the bad, if you treat them just the same?"

"Oh, everybody knows what I think of him, including himself," said Madeline lightly; "that's one of our refinements. And so you are going to have Rose and Eddy to visit you in the country. You are a couple of bold people—with a boy and a girl of your own. Of course there will be fallings in love."

Rowland laughed again, opening his mouth in simple enjoyment of the joke, as he took it. "I think I can answer for my two," he said.

"Oh, you can't answer for anybody!" said Lady Leighton, somewhat sharply. "Rose is a girl of the period, and scorns that kind of thing—so does my Mabel, save the mark! They are both going to do all sorts of things as soon as they are out—walk the hospitals! I don't know what absurd projects they have. But Eddy, I warn you, is a *mauvais sujet*, Evelyn. He is like his father. He makes love to everybody. I don't know what age Miss Rowland is—"

"Eighteen," said her father.

Lady Leighton threw up her hands. "His natural prey! And she has been brought up in the country, I suppose, and believes anything that is said to her—"

"She has been brought up," said Rowland, a little displeased with the turn the conversation was taking, "in Glasgow, which is a very different thing from the country, and perhaps not so much given to the innocence of faith."

"Oh!" said Lady Leighton, making a dead pause. She had not the least idea how a girl could be brought up in Glasgow, any more than if it had been Timbuctoo. The country she comprehended; town she comprehended—but Glasgow! A "smart" lady's information stops long before it comes to such a point as that.

"Perhaps," said Evelyn, troubled by all this, "I have been imprudent. It is awkward, anyhow, to have these young people coming to us so soon, when we are scarcely settled; but it is hard to say no, when one is appealed to, for the good of others."

"I hope," said Rowland, "it is an appeal you never will refuse. It shocks me rather to hear you now discussing your future guests. Don't they become sacred as soon as you invite them, like the strangers in a Bedouin's tent? That's our old Scotch way."

"Mr. Rowland, you are a darling," said Lady Leighton, "quite too great a darling, Evelyn, for this wicked world. I am so glad you have invited me! But is it not the Scotch way to tear one into little pieces after one is gone? The balance must be kept straight somehow."

"It is not the way in my house," he said, with a certain severity, not liking that little scoff at the Scotch way, though he had brought it on himself. Rowland had no objection to have his fling at his fellow-Scot when occasion served. He had vituperated the Glasgow tradesmen largely for being slow, for being behind the time. He had thought everything "provincial"—the hardest word to be applied to such a huge and important place; but he felt offended when any one else followed his example. Evelyn had begun to know the look in his face.

That afternoon, when they had completed all their last *emplettes*, chosen everything, ordered everything they wanted, and were seated together over the little tea-table which has once more become, though under changed circumstances from those of the eighteenth century, one of the confidential centres of life in England, a visitor appeared who disturbed their talk, and gave to the astonished Rowland another new sensation. He was tired with much movement, declaring that London fatigued him more than the hottest of the plains, and that the shops made a greater call on his energies than any railway or canal he had ever had to do with; and the rest and comparative coolness of the room was pleasant to them both, the beginning of the day having been unlucky, and a disagreeable turn given, as sometimes happens, to all its occurrences. There is something in luck after all, and perhaps the primitive people who turn back from the day's adventure at sea, and labour on land, because they have met an ill-omened passenger—an evil eye—have more reason in their superstition than is generally supposed. That morning's encounter with the invalid in his chair had been bad for the Rowlands. They had found nothing they wanted. The persons they desired to see had been out of the way. The commissions they had given were not executed to their mind. Everybody knows that sometimes, without any apparent cause, this will be the case, to the trial of one's temper and the confusion of all one's arrangements. Some one else had snapped up the picture which they had selected at the picture-dealer's. There had been nothing successful that they had done that day. Rowland, of course, was too enlightened and modern to think of anything like an evil eye. But Evelyn was old-fashioned, and not without a touch of natural and womanish superstition. She set it down to the score of Saumarez and

that meeting which she had wished so much to avoid ; and the thought oppressed her more than the contrarieties of the day. "It was all our unlucky meeting with that man," she even went so far as to say, when she came in, jaded and disappointed, feeling the unsuccessful day all the more that everything hitherto had been so very much the reverse. "Do you think he threw a spell upon us?" Rowland said with a laugh. "He doesn't look at all unlike an old magician, to say the truth." Evelyn's little outburst of temper somehow soothed her husband. And though he grumbled a little at the heat, which was worse than Indian, and declared that the English were asses never to have introduced the punkah, yet he soon recovered his elasticity of mind. And when the door opened and Miss Saumarez was announced, he was lounging in the easiest way upon a sofa, and discoursing to his wife, as he loved to discourse, upon the beautiful country to which he was about to take her, and the views from the colonnade which encircled Rosmore.

"Miss Saumarez." There walked in a tall girl in the simplest of dresses, but without a soil or sign of dust, or crease, or crumple of any description, perfectly self-possessed, yet perfectly unpretending, with that air of being and knowing that she was the best of her kind, which is born with some people, and to others is utterly beyond the possibility of being acquired. Rosamond would not have been fluttered, she would have known perfectly what to do and how to behave herself, had she walked into the presence of the Queen instead of into that of James Rowland, who, very much flustered, and conscious that he had loosed his necktie a little, and that his collar was not so stiff as it ought to be, got up in much surprise and discomfiture. Evelyn rose slowly from her low chair, with a feeling more wretched still. A sort of sick loathing of the very name, and of the connection she had so foolishly allowed herself to be drawn into, overwhelmed her ; and it was all she could do to keep this sensation out of her face as Rosamond came forward and offered a peachy cheek to her kiss. The young lady took in the aspect of things in a moment.

"I am afraid I have disturbed you," she said, "just when you are tired and resting. I asked the man if it was a good time, but he did not know. They never know anything, those servants in a hotel. But I will go away directly, as soon as I have asked one little question. Thank you very much, but I don't think I had better sit down."

She had a high-bred voice, soft but perfectly clear, with the finest low intonation. She spoke very quietly, but Rosamond always had the gift of being heard.

"Yes, yes, you must sit down," said Rowland, awakening to a more agreeable sentiment as he handed her a chair.

"We have just come in," said Evelyn. "You must forgive me : we have had a very tiring day."

"It is so hot and dusty, I do not wonder. One feels as if one

were breathing dust and noise and people, anything but air. But you have it hotter in India," she said, turning her face towards Rowland, with a little gracious acknowledgment of his presence, and of what and who he was.

"It is hotter, but there are more appliances. I was saying to my wife we should have had a punkah."

"Something that the poor natives pull and pull to give you air? I have heard of that—but who punkahs them?" said Rosamond, with a sweet severity, as if calling upon him to give an account of tyranny and selfish misgovernment, presumably, yet perhaps not inexcusably his fault.

"I am afraid we don't think much on that subject," said Rowland; "they are natives, you know, and like it, not the punkah, but the heat."

"Ah! there is, of course, always something to be said on both sides of a question. Dear Mrs. Rowland, I came to you from my father, who gets a great fidget with his illness. Since he cannot move himself, he likes to keep some one always in motion. It was to ask when we were to go to you, Eddie and I. I thought it would be better to wait until you let us know, but father thinks those who are to be obliged should take all the trouble, which of course is just, too. So will you please think it was not wanton intrusion, but to save you the trouble of writing a note."

"I'll answer for my wife, that she could not be otherwise than glad to see you," said Rowland, astonished to see that Evelyn hesitated.

Miss Rosamond gave him a pretty bow and smile, but it was evident that she considered his judgment an exceedingly small matter, and did not at all accept his answering for his wife, as he ignorantly thought himself quite qualified to do.

"Indeed, you must not think I take your coming as intrusion. And, of course, you must arrange your visits beforehand."

"It is scarcely that," said Rosamond. "We have not many visits to arrange: people don't ask a girl who is not out, except it is for charity, like you. And Eddy is rather a pickle: I have not concealed that from you. Nor is it to tell us the very day, as if I were putting a pistol to your head. Indeed, I only came because I was sent. Father is often exceedingly tiresome, but it is easier to do what he tells one than to argue with him that it is not what one ought to do."

"We have scarcely had time yet to consider what we shall be doing. Our house, you know, is scarcely in order yet. I hardly know what accommodation there is, or how we shall arrange matters. I know nothing yet but what I have been told. But as soon as we are quite settled," said Evelyn, "you may be sure that I will let you know."

"To be sure," said Rosamond; "I knew my instinct was right. Now, that is just what I wanted. I shall be able to satisfy father."

"But, my dear," cried Rowland in horror, "of course you will be delighted to see this young lady whenever she pleases. There is plenty of accommodation, and we could be doing nothing in which we should not be glad to have the pleasure of her company."

"Let me settle, please, James," said Evelyn, a little crossly. "These things want arranging, as Rosamond quite knows."

Consternation filled the mind of the man who did not know the ways of society. To allow an intending guest to feel as if by any possibility she might not be welcome at any time, overwhelmed him with dismay. He got up and walked to the window to free himself at least from responsibility—to be no party to such an astounding act of inhospitableness. Certainly that was not "our Scotch way." He stood there a little, with his back to them, listening to the soft voices running on. He was very susceptible to the music of these mellow, well-bred voices. And the girl's had no sound of offence in it, neither had Evelyn's any hardness. He stood looking at the street, while they had it out between them, calculating the times and seasons. Not for about a month did the Saumarez family leave London. Miss Rosamond had to go to her grandmother's, and it was the time of Eddy's examination; so that arrangement was necessary on both sides. He stood there feeling more and more every moment what an ignoramus he was. He would have bidden the young people to come at once, to accompany him through all the difficulties of settling down, had he had his way; and to accept such an invitation would have disturbed all their plans as well as Evelyn's. Well, well! in this respect it was evident that the calm society way was the best. And yet, middle-aged as he was, and acquainted with the world as he believed himself to be, he felt that he would not have liked to have a proposed visit from himself discussed and regulated like this.

"I hope you have settled," he said, coming back from the window, when the soft ripple of the voices came to a little pause.

"Oh, yes, the fifth of October; thank you very much," said Rosamond. "That will suit us quite, extremely well. Father will still be at Aix, and Eddy's exam. will be over, and I shall have finished with grandmamma. Thank you so very much, dear Mrs. Rowland. Now I see father was right in making me come—though I did disturb you at the first."

"Only because I was a little cross, my dear, and tried——"

"I don't believe she is ever cross—is she?" said Rosamond, appealing to Rowland. "We shall see how you put up with Eddy. Eddy is enough to make any one cross. Of course he will break down in his exam.: he always has done it, and he always will. There are some boys who seem to go on like that on purpose that everybody may see they will not take the trouble. There seems some pride among boys as to not taking

trouble. They are ashamed to say they have worked for anything. And father seems to understand it, but I do not."

"Neither do I, Miss Rosamond," said Rowland ; "you and I will agree. I think a young fellow should be flogged that goes on like that."

"I should not like Eddy to be flogged," said Rosamond, in her cool, even, sweet voice. "Of course he was flogged at Eton—swished, as they call it—and he did not mind one bit. They rather like it. They are proud of what is a shame, and ashamed of things they ought to be proud of. That's one of the things Eddy says 'that no girl can understand.'"

Rowland approached the table where the tea still stood, and where the young lady was eating bread-and-butter in her composed and reasonable way. "Do you go to a great many balls ?" he said, in the tone which he might have applied to a child.

Rosamond regarded him from top to toe with her calm luminous eyes. She paused a moment as if wondering at such extreme fatuity. Then she said, "I am not out yet," with great seriousness. A few minutes later she unbent. "I do not wonder you are surprised. I am eighteen, but father's condition stops him from doing many things—that he does not care to do. Grandmother is too old to go to Court, and nobody has cared very much to take me. I shall perhaps be presented next year."

"By the bye," said Rowland, looking with eagerness at his wife.

"What is it, James ?"

"Oh, nothing," he said, going off again to the window. Both of the ladies divined at once what he wanted to say ; Evelyn with a faint regretful sense of the excitement which he betrayed ; Rosamond with a much more prosaic feeling that here was something which they wanted to consult each other about. She would have liked to stay to hear what it was, but a better instinct persuaded her that it was time to go away.

"You have some one with you ?" said Evelyn, as she rose to go.

"I have Champion : he always takes care of me. I do not often bring him out at this hour ; but he is quite sufficient for a protector. Ah, might I bring Champion ? He does nothing wrong, never misbehaves, nor attempts to lie on sofas. He is a gentleman. *Might* I bring him ? It would be such a favour, for the house will be shut up, and grandmamma cannot bear dogs."

"Is it a dog ?—to be sure !" said Rowland. "I suppose that's in my department, Evelyn. My son Archie and you will get on very well, if you are fond of dogs."

"Oh !" said Rosamond. There was something in that monosyllable which implied a good deal more. "Oh," it seemed to say, "you have a son Archie, and he is fond of dogs ? I don't make much account of your son Archie—still—" There was all this in the varying of her tone ; but she did not ask any questions. She presented her peach-like cheek once more to Evelyn

to be kissed, and she offered her hand with a little inclination of a curtsey to Rowland. He went down-stairs with her, though she remonstrated, and watched her untie her dog from the railings with a sense of wondering, wistful admiration. "Oh," he breathed in his heart, "if Marion was but like that!" He burst into words when he got up-stairs. "Oh, if I could but see Marion like that!" This exclamation was quite unintentional and involuntary: he was startled into it, and almost regretted he had said it the moment the words were out.

"Why!" said Evelyn, wondering. Then she added, "I hope Marion will end by being something much better than that."

"Better!" he paused a little. "I wish I saw her at all like that. The voice, and the manner, and the dress. That girl talks almost like you: how composed she is—taking everything just as it ought to be taken: understanding— You have something about you, people in your class—you are more philosophical—you seem to know what things mean, even a child like that: while Marion—poor little Marion—she is ready to cry or fly into a passion about anything—nothing—and to say little impertinent senseless things. Even the very dress—"

"Dear James, I say what I mean. Probably dear little Marion is far better in her naturalness than this. I mean nothing against Rosamond. She is made up of so many things. She is natural too, but it is a nature which is full of art. You would not like Marion to understand as she does, poor child. As for the dress—"

He had received this with much shaking of his head. Marion's naturalness! If only Evelyn might find it so. He thought Rosamond much more natural for his part, and he was very grateful to his wife for the "dear little Marion," which indeed was more the fruit of opposition in Evelyn than of an affection which she could scarcely have been expected to feel for a girl whom she had never seen. He caught at the last words as something to which he could reply—"The dress?"

"I have been thinking about that. It is a great pity you did not bring them both up with you to town, James, for that purpose. It was almost certain there would be deficiencies in dress."

He smote upon his thigh in disgust with himself. "If I had only thought of that! Indeed I did think of it; but I thought—in short I got out of heart a little with the whole concern. I thought—I would keep you from disappointment as long as I could; keep you from seeing what they are; what little, common, foolish—Evelyn, I have had a terrible disappointment, a hideous sort of undeception. It is all my own fault—that I should have been such a heartless fool as to leave them there all these years!"

Evelyn got up to support him in this sudden breakdown. She put her arm round the big shoulders, which it would not

half encircle. "James, dear James! what nonsense you are talking. Your children and your Mary's—no, no, my good man! you are excited; you are over-anxious; you have judged the poor dear children too hardly. Shall we stay another week and have them down here, and set the clothes to rights? Fancy you, of all people in the world, being so much influenced by a question of clothes!"

"If it were only that!" he said, holding her close to him, almost weeping on her shoulder. It was safer not to investigate what it was that made the strong man's eyes so wet and sore. Evelyn did not attempt any such prying, but let him hide himself—he so much stronger than she was—in her soft hold, and swallow the sob that was in his capacious heart. No one ever guessed but in that moment, what it was to James Rowland to have lost his ideal children, the little things with all their sweetness whom he remembered, and to have found the commonplace young man and woman whom he now knew. Evelyn's tender sympathy, compassion, and presently the tremulous laugh with which she began to jest and tease him about his devotion to externals, his fancy for fine clothes, brought him at last to himself. He was a little ashamed to feel his eyes red, to know that he must look almost like a woman who had been crying when he raised his head to the light. But all that Evelyn did to betray her knowledge was a little kiss upon his eyes, which she gave him heartily, as if in spite of herself. And then they sat down to consider the question, which was decided at last in favour of "going home," as Evelyn called it, there to take such steps for a complete renewal of Marion's wardrobe as her taste and knowledge would suggest. It was easy to talk of the clothes, to which she had playfully directed the conversation—too serious and too emotional to be otherwise discussed: but both of them were very well aware that a great deal more was meant.

It was some time after that, when the gravity of the situation had been dissipated, and lighter thoughts and talk came in, that he asked her with a little shamefacedness, whether she had gone through that ceremonial to which Rosamond Saumarez had referred. "I suppose you have been—presented, as they call it," he said with a laugh.

"Oh, yes—at the proper time, when I was a girl. I was only at one drawing-room after that. We were too poor to afford the dress."

"You are not too poor now to afford—whatever you please in that way—Evelyn :" he laughed, abashed and shy, but eager, "should you think it right to—go again."

"Oh, yes," she said by no means so earnestly. "I hope you would not dislike it, James."

"Dislike it!—to show one's reverence and homage to the Queen? Good heavens, no! if a man felt good enough—it seems as if it should be a kind of duty, Evelyn."

"Yes," she said, not so fervent even now; "but not this year. I can take Marion next spring."

He laughed so that he almost cried. "And I suppose I shall have to get myself up in some ridiculous costume or other to go with you—me and little Mey—a pair of guys—before the Queen!"

## CHAPTER XIX.

THIS sudden glimpse into her husband's deeper nature which it was so easy to lose sight of in his genial and easy exterior, touched Evelyn more than words could say. She entered into his profound discontent with the tenderest sympathy, a little appalled by it indeed, and by the prospect of struggling in her own person with the two grown-up children, who were so much more difficult a problem at the age they had now reached than had they been younger. She contemplated the prospect with no little dismay. The words of his faltering disclosure, "little, common, foolish," were of all others the words most difficult to reconcile with any higher or generous quality. The only thing that seemed to have broken the shock to James was that the boy had his mother's eyes. But what, Evelyn said to herself with a little shudder, would the mother herself have appeared to Rowland now, if she had been living all these years stagnant in their old world, growing fat and prosaic, while he had gained so many new experiences? And how much might his disappointment have to do with herself, and that faculty of seeing things through other eyes which comes with sympathy and close intercourse. He might not have required so much from his little Marion, poor child, if it had not been for Evelyn. So much the greater, then, was her responsibility who had accustomed him to a different standard, and so unintentionally brought to him an acute pang. Evelyn said to herself that, however *désillusioné* her husband might be, she must try to keep a motherly glamour in her own eyes. She must endeavour to suffer long and be kind, to think no evil—neither to be disgusted nor discouraged. It was perhaps partly her fault. She must take it upon her own shoulders, and refuse to see anything that was undesirable to be seen. But it was very difficult for her to form any just idea of what was the special trouble which she had to expect—even of how the littleness and commonness would show themselves. She thought of a wild girl speaking broad Scotch, a young man with sinewy limbs, and perhaps (forgive her ignorance) a kilt, speaking the language which in books is put into the lips of the Celt. They were not Celts, she knew, and Glasgow was not a place for gillies and wild Highlanders. But of the gillies and wild Highlanders she did know a little, though of Glasgow, nothing, no more than if it had been

in the South Seas. She tried to compose the imagination which painted a highly coloured tableau, full of red hair and freckles, and a wonderful primitive speech. Always, she felt she must recollect, James might have judged them less severely but for herself, though she in her own person would be the last to throw any cold shade upon them. It is needless to say that this new light shed an illumination that was much less tempting upon the house of which he was so proud, and which her discriminating judgment soon made out, according to the graphic description of Marion, to be chiefly "a view." She had learned to recognize the imposing object it must be from the Clyde steamer after the description which her husband had given her so often, and from the same source she recognized the corresponding view from the colonnade upon the Clyde and the passing boats. These were the chief things he had told her—and no society, and that unkempt, uncultured two. In her innermost retirement Evelyn shuddered a little at what was before her.

It was not a very pleasant prospect, especially with Rosamond's clear eyes observing everything in the interior, and carrying back her report to the world. However, all this had to be faced courageously. She had undertaken the burden, and she must fit it to her back. No one could help her with it, nor was it fit that she should desire to elude it. It was henceforward her work in the world, and to comfort her husband in his discontentment ; to charm it away ; to persuade him that things were better than he thought, and, lastly and chiefly, to make them so, was her occupation, the trust she had received. She did not confess either to him or any one the alarm it gave her. She laughed him quietly out of his depression. "You will see things will arrange themselves," she said. But it must be confessed that when Evelyn set out, surrounded by every luxury, with a railway director to hand her into a special carriage, and all the officials, great and small, bowing down before the great Indian railway man, she was disposed to think all this honour and glory something like a farce, considering what she was going to. Had she travelled in the simplest way, nobody taking any notice, with the humblest quiet house awaiting her, without these "complications," how much more light-hearted would she have been ! But fortunately James liked the attention of the railway people : a King's Cross director was an important functionary in his eyes. The inspectors and porters to him were like the regiment to a military man. It was agreeable to have the recognition that he was somebody, that his life had not been spent in vain.

Meanwhile, the news of the approaching arrival had a very great effect in Sauchiehall Road, whither Mr. Rowland had written directing that Marion and Archie should proceed to Rosmore on Tuesday, to be there when he arrived with his wife. "You can go down in the morning," he wrote, "and tell the housekeeper we shall be at home for dinner. Nothing more

than this will be needed, she will know what to do. You can occupy the rooms you preferred when you were at Rosmore with me, but with this reservation, that Mrs. Rowland may make other arrangements when she comes." This perhaps was not a very judicious way of presenting his wife to his children, but few men are judicious in this particular. He intended that they should understand at once that Evelyn was sovereign mistress of the house.

"Mrs. Rowland," said Aunty Jean, "and the housekeeper!" Her voice sank below her breath in apparent awe, but this was only the cloak of other emotions. "Oh, the ingratitude," she cried, "of men—though many and many a time has he thankit me for being so good to you bairns, that have been like my ain. And now he has gotten a housekeeper, and never even offered me the place: there is nae gratitude in men."

"You the place—of the housekeeper? She's just a servant," said Marion.

"And what am I but just a servant? I've been ane, ye needna denyt, to you: it's been aye your pleasure that has been followed, no mine: and I was a servant lass before I was married, and thought no shame. No: I have nane of your silly pride about words. A housekeeper with a good wage and a good house behind her, and the command of all the orders, is a very responsible person. He might at least have given me the offer, and I would have thought it no discredit. It would have been a grand provision for me at my age."

"I would never have consented," said Archie, for once taking the first word. "A servant in my father's house!"

"Nor me," said Marion, "it's just out of the question. I would never have spoken to him if he had dared to offer that to you."

"I would have thought it nae discredit," said Mrs. Jean. "And ye'll maybe, with all your pride, tell me what's to become of me now? It's little, very little, I have laid away. My heart was aye set on to do ye full justice. A' my young days ye have had the best of them. I've seen many a good place go past me, and even a good man, but I would never gie up my trust; and now ye are going away without a tear in your e'e, or a word in your mouth for your auld aunty—that was just too faithful to you. And I'll have to take a place somegate for my living. He might have given me the offer at the least."

"If you think my father will leave you without a provision," said Archie—

"A provision!" said Marion, more doubtfully, "that's a great thing—but a little assistance you may be quite sure—and we'll always come and see you, and bring you anything we can. Aunty, ye need not be taking up time with little things of yours when there's us to settle about. We must go, as papa says we are to go. Is there anything I will be wanting to wear?"

"We might all die and be buried, and Mey's first thought would be what she would have to wear!"

"That's reasonable enough," said the aunt; "she would want mourning if ony one of the family—but we needna think of that till the time comes. There wouldna be much wanted for me," she went on, beguiled, however, by the doleful, delightful subject, though it was contrary to her own injunction; "there's little crape ever wasted on a poor aunty in these days, 'Oh, it's no a very near relation—just our aunt,' they will say, and oot in a' the colours of the rainbow in six months or less."

"Aunty Jean," said Marion, in her calm little voice; "it's no a funeral we're thinking of, but to go down to Rosmore on Tuesday to meet papa—and mamma."

"I wouldna stoop to call her mamma. I would call her just Mrs. Rowland, as he says."

"I have settled in my mind about that," said the girl, "but not about my frock. Will I wear that one he bought me at MacColl's shop? The body's not made, but Miss Peebles would do it if she got her orders to-night; or I might wear my silk? If you would tell me what you think about that, and just let the other things alone."

"Ye have nae mair feeling," protested Mrs. Brown, "than a little cat—as ye are."

"But a cat has no need to take thought about its dress," said Marion, philosophically, "and see, I'm wanting to make a good impression. My silk would maybe look too grown-up, and trying to be grand; and it's a very rustling silk, like your red one, aunty. But I notice that very soft silks are the fashion, and white is becoming to me. If the body was made like that one of Janet MacColl's——"

"With plenty of nice red ribbons——"

"No red ribbons at all," cried Marion, "but just muslin work, and all white. In white," she continued, with natural perception, "you cannot go far wrong. I wish I was as easy in my mind about Archie. His trousers are all bags at the knees, and there's something about his coat—Papa," said Marion, "is an old gentleman, but there's something quite different about his coat."

"I would just imagine sae," said Mrs. Brown with contempt. "What is he caring about his coat, a man of his age, whereas Archie's but a young lad! I would buy a pair of lavender gloves, Archie. With all that money in your pocket ye may weel allow yourself a pair of gloves, and Marion too."

"Oh, I will buy her as many gloves as she likes," said Archie, with something of the tone of the millionaire—as he felt himself to be. He had the remains of the twenty pounds in his pocket after having got many gratifications out of it, including the dinner to the lads, which had been highly successful, but not very costly, and he was on the whole very well satisfied with himself.

"I canna remember," said Mrs. Brown, "that ye have offered gloves or onything else, or so much as a flower, to me. But

that's a very different question," she added, with satirical briskness ; "I'm just mysel' the old glove that ye toss away. It's done its part, poor thing, but ye've nae mair use for it.—Mey, slip the new frock on ye that I may see how it looks, and then you could run to Miss Peebles. If she canna do it, I will just have to cobble it up for you mysel'."

"I'm going to have no cobbling up," said Marion decisively. "She must just do it, whether she can or not. She would be very fain to get jobs from Rosmore."

"Aunty, did ye mean yon—about my never giving ye anything ?" said Archie, when May had gone.

"Me, laddie? No, no, I didna mean it. I was just in a giring humour. She doesna see it, and you dinna see it ; and maybe I think more than I should about the dirty siller, and how I am to make my living after having been used to owre muckle comfort and ease. But it's just my life that's going from me," cried Mrs. Brown, putting her handkerchief to her eyes. "If I did speak about the housekeeper's place, it was no for the grand situation nor the wages, nor even the perquisites, it was just that I would have been near my bairns. I would have seen my bairns —them the young lady and the young gentleman, and me the servant woman ; but I could have seen them every day, and now the Lord kens if I'll ever see them mair."

"Aunty, we're not savages nor brute beasts : how can ye think ye will never see us mair?"

"My laddie," she said in her tears ; "it's no only that you'll be taken from me, but I'll have to think of mysel' too. I canna keep up a house like this over my head, nor a servant to do my work. I will have to get lodgers, or take a place, or do something for my bread. I will maybe leave Gleska a' thegither," she added in a tone of despair, as who should have said leave paradise ; "for I have my little pride like other folk, and I woudna like them that have kent me here, with every comfort about me, to see me taiglin' after a wheen lodgers, or standing about the register office looking for a place."

"Aunty Jean, ye cannot for a moment think that my father would leave you like that without a provision. If he does, I will leave him."

"Oh, Archie, hold your peace ; it's not your part to speak."

"I will !" cried the boy, flushing red. "I will never go near his grand house. He may do what he likes, he will get nothing out of me. I was just in an awful state of delight when he was coming home," said Archie ; "you know I was. It was the king enjoying his ain again, like the songs. I thought everything in the world was coming right." He turned a little aside and dashed something out of the corner of his eye. "Aunty," he said in an altered voice, "I will confess to you that I am real disappointed in my father. He's no the man I expected. He's like other men, grabbed and thinking of himself. Even when he does a

kind thing, as he did about that money, it's in such a way that you just want to fling it back in his face!"

"Oh dinna say that," cried Mrs. Brown, alarmed ; "you mustna say that. He has his ain ways of thinking, but he's a good father, Archie. Look how he has kept you all your lives with every luxury ; he's grudged you nothing. It was just for me to say what you wanted, and as much as you wanted it was aye ready ; never an objection in his mind. Oh, no, no ! you must never say that ! To turn you against your papaw is the last thing in the world that would please me. Look what he's done for us a' for years and years. I always kent it had to stop some time or other. At first I thought when he came hame, we would just all go to him and keep thegither. I didna realize what a grand wealthy gentleman he had grown. I thought of the siller and nothing else. I expected he would be just like what he was in the foundry, but rich ; and that's what I brought you up to expect. It was just a dreadful mistake. I saw it all the moment I set eyes upon him. I just divined it before that when I heard of his new wife. It's my fault : you've not been brought up as ye ought to have been, for I didna understand things, Archie. Now I understand. But oh, my bonnie man, dinna take up a grudge against your papaw ! He's been as kind to me as ever he could be. Now he's done wi' me, and I'm no more wanted. I've nae claim upon him that he should provide for me, a great, muckle, strong woman, no fifty, quite able to work. But for the Lord's sake, Archie, whatever you do, dinna you turn on your papaw !"

"Aunty Jean," said the lad, who was half sobbing too, "I think he's a just man, and, as you say, he has never grudged money. If he provides for you, I'll give you my word I'll do justice to him. I'll listen to no prejudice. I'll just give him my best attention, and maybe we'll come to understand one another. But if he doesn't, God forgive him for it, for I'll not. I'll come back here, and I'll take a situation, and we'll fend together. You shall have no lodger but me ; you'll be house-keeper to nobody but me. This shall just be the test for him, if he's the man I thought him or no. And if it's no, he may search the world for a son : he'll get none of me !"

"Oh, my ain laddie !" said Mrs. Brown, choked by tears and emotion. She could say nothing more, for at this moment the door opened and Marion entered, wearing the skirt of the pretty dress which her father had allowed her to buy at Mr. MacColl's splendid shop. The stuff intended to make the "body" was wound round her shoulders. She resembled exceedingly one of the figures which make so fine an appearance in the shops. It was an ideal which would certainly have satisfied her highest desires. She was too much absorbed to notice the emotion of the others. "You see," she said as she caine in, "the skirt is very nice and wants no altering. It is just my length, which is a providence. I think this is far better than my silk."

Mrs. Brown awakening to a new interest, got up and walked round her, inspecting the garment closely. Perhaps she was glad of the occasion of concluding an interview which was agitating to both; but the attraction of the half-made dress would have been a great one in any circumstances. Archie took the opportunity to escape, neither having nor pretending to have any interest in the matter, while a very keen and close discussion went on about the manner of "making up the body." In respect to this these ladies were not of the same mind, Mrs. Brown being reluctant to accept Marion's new theory of simplicity, which the sharp little girl had picked up somehow since the change which had come in her fortunes. Aunty Jean wanted bright ribbons, a sash, a bow at the throat "to brighten it up," as she said. But Marion held her own. It was only at the close of the controversy that she found out that anything had been amiss. She turned upon her aunt as if she were making an accusation. "Your eyes are red," she said; "you've been crying!" with a tone in which there was a certain sense of injury, as of one who had been left out.

"Weel, if I have been crying, it's naething extraordinary," said Mrs. Brown; "naething to call for your notice."

"What is it that's the matter now?"

"You have just not as much heart as would lie on a sixpence, to ask me such a question. There's your father will be just like you. He will think nothing about it. He will think I should just give ye up as I took ye; the one as pleasant as the other. Oh, it is very little that folk kens, when they begin, how it's to end."

"But I suppose," said Marion, "you would like us to have the advantage now that he has come home? You never expected we were just to bide on with you."

"Oh, no, I never expected it: I'm no just a fool for all the way that ye set up your little neb to me."

"Well," said Marion, "then what have ye to complain of, Aunty Jean? You knew all the time: it was always his meaning to come home; and ye have always spoken about it. Both Archie and me, we've learned to look forward to it; and ye would like us to lose all the advantage now!"

"It's you that just canna understand. It's maybe not your fault. I was very muckle taken up with mysel' and what I had to put on, when I was your age. No your mother: she was aye different. It's me rather that you're like—for all that ye'll think shame to speak to me in the street three months after this day."

"What for should I think shame to speak to you," said Marion; "for everybody knows ye belong to us, Aunty Jean? There would be no reason for that: we cannot hide it if we wanted to hide it. It would just be bringing odium on ourselves."

"And that's a' ye have to say?"

"What more should I say ? I'll just go and take off the skirt, and run round to Miss Peebles about the body ; for between this and Tuesday there's very little time."

"There is none to lose, that's true. Ye had better tell her that ye want it on Monday night, for they're never to be lippen't to, thae mantua-makers."

"That will be the best way." But perhaps she felt a little compunctious ; for she paused at the door to throw a look back and a word. "I think ye may make your mind easy, Aunty Jean, that papa will not do a shabby thing either to us or to you."

Mrs. Brown raised her hand to dismiss the subject with a certain natural pride. But though she would not discuss it with Marion, in whose calculations affection was not taken into account, it was not without a certain comfort that she adopted this conclusion. No, he would not do a shabby thing. It had never been his character. Even when he was a working-man, Jims Rowland had never been shabby. He might be a wee hard to them that offended him, but shabby—no. There was comfort in that. So that perhaps, after all, Marion's matter-of-fact consolation was practically of more importance than her brother's feeling. "She's no an ill creature after all," Mrs. Brown said to herself.

The "body" was fortunately done in time, and the dress put on with much satisfaction when Tuesday came, which proved to be, fortunately, a fine day—a day on which a white dress was not inappropriate. Mrs. Brown wept plentifully as the young pair left her. To them it was only a "ploy," but to her it was the parting—the end of her brighter life. She looked after them with maternal pride, proud of their good looks and their best clothes, and even the new boxes that were piled upon the top of the cab. She might have been invited to go down with them to break the parting a little. He might have thought of a little thing like that, not to treat her just as if she were an old nurse, to be dismissed when they were done with her. Jean looked after them with streaming eyes. They were not thinking that it was good-bye : they had left half of their things behind : they were coming back—oh, very often, and certainly in a day or two, they both said. It was only a ploy to them. And so well as they looked, two young things that anybody might be proud of. She thought of Rowland's triumph in showing them to his wife, and how astonished that proud lady would be to see the two, just so lady-like and so gentleman-like ! That was Mrs. Brown's view of the case, and it gave her consolation in the middle of her woe.

The young people were surprised that their appearance in the boat and at the pier, where they landed, was not the subject of any demonstration. If their father had been received as a person of importance, how much more should they who were not elderly or old-fashioned like him, but in all the triumph of

their youth—his heirs, to whom everything would eventually belong. There was, however, only the dog-cart, no more, waiting for them at the pier, with Sandy the groom, who was too friendly by half, and not nearly so much impressed as he ought to have been with their importance. They spent an hour or two by themselves, which would have hung very heavy on their hands had not Archie darted down to see the dogs, and Marion employed herself in arranging her “things” in her room, which was nearly as large as the whole area of the house in Sauchiehall Road. And then the important moment came. The dog-cart had been good enough for them, but it was not good enough for Mrs. Rowland, and it was in the great new resplendent landau that Marion solemnly drove down, all alone, and looking important enough to fill the whole carriage, to meet the lady whom she called mamma.

## CHAPTER XX

EVELYN came fully up to her husband's expectations, which were not small, in the way of admiration. She had not, indeed, been thinking much about the beauty of the country, her mind being fully occupied by matters more important, so that the Clyde, and the loch, and Rosmore, burst upon her more or less as a surprise. She delighted Rowland, whose whole being was on the watch to see what she would say, by her exclamations. “What a beautiful situation! What a lovely view the people must have who live there. What is—Oh!” She broke off abruptly, seeing the flush of pleasure and broad smile of happiness which came over his face. “So that is Rosmore,” she added: “I can see it in your face!”

“Ay, that's just Rosmore,” he said, with a thickness in his voice; “and this is just the spot, if this confounded boat would stand still for a moment, where I have watched for it appearing since ever I was a lad, and wished and wondered if it would ever be mine.” He put his arm through hers, as he had a way of doing, and held her close—“And now it is mine; and you are mine, Evelyn, that was still more unlikely by far.”

“You must not flatter me by comparing me to that beautiful place; and I pray God you may be very happy in it now you have got it. It is certainly an ideal place.”

“Is it not?” cried Rowland, delighted. It is to be feared that he did not at that moment remember his poor homely Mary, who had been with him so often when he watched for the opening in the trees, and worshipped his idol afar off. “Toots, nonsense,” Mary had said with a laugh at his absurdity, so many times. He did not think of her, but Evelyn did, with a curious tenderness for the simple little woman who, probably, by this

time would have developed into a stout and matter-of-fact matron, and disappointed her husband as much as his children had done, although the love between them had been as true and full of natural poetry as any, *dans les temps*. Evelyn was quite aware of her husband's shortcomings, and that there were various superficial failures in him which justified the superficial judgment that he was "not a gentleman," that most damning of English criticism; but she knew at the same time how it was that the fact of his son not appearing a gentleman was the source of grief to him, and how critical his eyes would be, and how exacting his demands in this respect. Poor little Mary! Perhaps it was as well that she had died in the far-off poetical time. Evelyn felt a little moisture in the corner of her eye, and made a promise in her heart to the wife of James Rowland from the foundry, who was so different from James Rowland, the great railway man from India. "I will do what I can for them, Mary!" was what Evelyn said. Her husband saw the little glimmer on her eyelash, and pressed her arm with fond delight and pride. "I can never be thankful enough," he said, "Evelyn, for the way you enter into your rough husband's feelings—my bonnie lady of Rosmore!" That was the very foundry lad who spoke, the very poet of the ironworks whose imagination ran in the ways of iron and steel, and who had attained for himself so incalculable a triumph—everything, and more than everything, that heart could desire—Rosmore, and its bonnie lady! His emotion touched his wife, not displeased—as what woman would be?—to feel herself the very crown of his acquisition; yet her heart went back all the more to poor Mary, whose arm he had probably held in the same way while he glowered with adoration at the white colonnade from the deck of this very steamboat (if steamboats live so long), and who had said, "Toots, Jims, what nonsense!" with her Glasgow accent, thinking that in that particular her husband, who was so clever and soon might rise to be foreman, was little better than a fool.

After this ecstatic moment was over, they both fell into silence, a little anxious for the approaching meeting: he for what she would think of his children: she for what the children would turn out to be. She had begun to doubt a little whether the son would be an unkempt lad in a kilt, like the nephew with whom Mrs. Reuben Butler, once of that same parish, had made disastrous acquaintance. The shabby young men about Glasgow and Greenock had not been of the kind of the Whistler, as indeed, on second thoughts, her reason convinced her Archie was not the least likely to be: nor would Marion probably have the red hair and the short tartan frock, which had been her first idea of what was the probable appearance of the girl with whom Rowland had been so much disappointed. The sight in the distance of a white and a dark speck on the Rosmore pier, as the boat crossed the shining loch, brought Rowland's heart

to his mouth, and made him almost incapable of speech. "Yon will be them," he said with a parched mouth, gripping her arm. And Evelyn did not feel disposed to say anything, or to remark upon the beauty of the hills, though they lighted up in all their purple hollows, and threw out all their blue peaks, as if to catch her attention. Nature has a wonderful charm, if there is not some human emotion before her to pre-occupy both heart and eye. The range of mountains at the head of the loch were after all not of half so much importance as the little white figure on the pier head, of which scarcely the first fact of its existence was as yet perceptible, or the taller one that already seemed to sway and lounge with idle limbs beside her. Evelyn kept her eyes fixed upon them as she drew nearer and nearer, and gradually a feeling of relief stole into her heart. There was nothing so very alarming that James should have made such a fuss! "My dear James," she said, turning to him, "I suppose you did it for a joke: your Marion is a dear little girl." He pressed her arm close, but he could not say anything: his middle-aged heart was beating. "Archie I must study more at leisure, but he looks very nice too," she added with more of an effort. Perhaps, after all, the boy would have been better in a kilt, with his hair over his eyes, like the Whistler in the *Heart of Midlothian*. She looked on breathless as the steamboat drew to the pier. Certainly they would rush on board to greet their father, to bring him home in triumph, even if they were less anxious to make her acquaintance; but Marion and Archie did not budge an inch. They stood there, on the defensive, a little defiant, staring, waiting till they were spoken to; and in the bustle of the arrival, the haste of the transference from the quickly departing steamboat to the land, with all the baggage which Rowland, with his habits of personal superintendence, did not think the maid and man whom they had brought able to deal with, Evelyn found herself flung upon the two without any introduction. She put out her hand to her step-daughter. "You are Marion, I am sure," she said, drawing the girl towards her and kissing her on both cheeks. "I am very glad to see you, my dear."

"And so am I—to see you—mamma," said the girl reddening and staring. The name felt to Evelyn like a stone flung in her face.

"And this is Archie," she said, transferring Marion's somewhat unwilling, hot little gloved hand to her left, and holding out the other to the boy. He for his part made no answer, but gave her a quick look, and then withdrew his eyes. "Your father is too busy to think about us till the luggage is all right," she said; "but I hope we are going to be, we three, very great friends."

"Oh, we'll be all that," said Marion with a laugh, working her hand out of Evelyn's hold. Archie made no reply; he too drew his hand away from her as soon as she had shaken it,

which was the only thing, so far as he was aware, that any one could want to do with another person's hand. He gave her a second look as he did this, which Evelyn did not perceive, but in which Mary's eyes made a little, a very little essay of a reply to her, had she but seen it. She stood by them a moment, not knowing how to proceed further, with the little crowd of the pier pressing round, and the wheelbarrow for the luggage knocking against the group. "Is that our carriage?" said Evelyn. "Don't you think the best thing you could do would be to put your sister and me into it, until your father gets through his troubles?" Put her into it! Archie had not an idea what she meant. Was he to lift her up and set her down in it, like a doll? He stared and hung about on those loose legs of his, which could not even stand firm, and followed her awkwardly to the carriage, where the footman stood opening the door. What was there for Archie to do? The footman was there to help them in, if they needed to be helped in. He followed them, and hung about, the most unnecessary personage. The footman belonged to the turn-out, he was in his proper place; but where was the need of Archie? Evelyn took pity upon him, when she saw his helpless looks. "Go and see if you can be of use to your father," she said. Of use to his father! when there were two servants with his father. It was their business, not Archie's. He turned and went reluctantly back again, with his idle legs, and his hands in his pockets. The Archie of Sauchiehall Road would have picked up a portmanteau and carried it in with the greatest cheerfulness; but this was the Archie of Rosmore.

"Well, there you are," said Rowland, shaking hands with him cursorily. "Just show Stanchion, will you, where the cart is for the luggage. I suppose they've sent something to bring him up and Mrs. Rowland's maid."

Archie knew nothing about it, and said so. "You said you had given all the directions."

"So I did, but you might show the man the way at least," said Rowland, hurrying forward to the carriage. Archie stood among the crowd, with the boxes and barrows bumping at his legs, for a full minute more, then, as his better angel began to get the advantage, took one hand out of his pocket, and made a step to the tall and fussy valet, who stood among a mountain of boxes. "Yonder's the cart from the House," he said, pointing to the highway, where the cart and dog-cart stood among the trees. "It's no use telling me yonder's the cart. You'll better lend a hand, young man, or how are them boxes to get there?" said Mr. Rowland's gentleman, who prided himself in being a better gentleman than his master. To understand the rage that boiled up in Archie's breast, it would be necessary to fathom the angry contempt with which a Scotch clerk of the humbler kind, but capable of being a great merchant one day, or even the Scotch artisan, regards a domestic servant, however magnificent. Archie could have slain Mr. Stanchion where he stood.

He did not laugh, as his father's son ought to have done, at the mistake. As he swung round on his heel, his father called out from the carriage, "Hallo, Archie, Mrs. Rowland wants to know if you're coming with us : make haste." He stared a moment with a sullen countenance, and then, turning again, walked quickly off without a word.

"He says he would rather walk," said Evelyn, "which is what young men generally do."

"I did not hear him say a word."

"Nor me, papa," said Marion, with a laugh. She thought Archie's "sulks" were a good joke, and, to do her justice, saw no harm in them, nor anticipated any consequences from his ill temper. "We just never mind," she added, feeling mistress of the position, "when he's in an ill key." And Marion was very gracious to her father and his wife as they drove home. She pointed out to Mrs. Rowland various points of view. "That's the Chieftain's Leap, but it's nothing to see, just a red scaur, and trees growing all about ; but a little further on is a good view of Greenock and the docks and the big chimney smoking, and up there you can see down upon Kilrossie, where everybody goes for the salt water—for the sea-bathing, I mean."

"The salt water is a very picturesque description," said Evelyn, "and full of local colour." She laughed at herself for her own words, but it was better to make talk of any kind, than to see that cloud settling down on her husband's face.

"And down there," said Marion, "is Rankin's cottage, the old gamekeeper who has the dogues. He is a cripple creature himself since he had his accident, but the dogues are very nice little things. Archie has bought two. He says they will be good for watch-dogs about the House. And Rankin himself is a very funny old man to talk to—but I do not care for him, for he is always on about Lady Jean."

"Who is Lady Jean?"

"Oh, she is the Earl's sister ; old, and not pretty, and not married. I don't know why they make such a fuss about her. There's no interest in a person like that."

"Don't you think you might let somebody get in a word from time to time," said Rowland ; "I have heard nothing but your little voice since ever we arrived."

"Well, I hope my little voice is better than nothing, papa. And you will not hear very much from Archie. He is just as sulky as he can be about Aunty Jean. He thinks she should have come down here with us, to see us settled, and make acquaintance with mamma, and all that. The very idea ! but boys have so little sense. That is not what Aunty Jean cares so much about herself. She is more concerned in her mind about what she is to do next."

"Is Aunty Jean the lady who brought you up ? Indeed, then, I do think, James, that she has not been very nicely treated.

She has been so devoted to the children. It was the least thing you could do to ask her to bring them home, and let me show how we appreciated her goodness and affection. You must give me the address, Marion, and I will write to-morrow."

"Oh," said Marion with a gasp, raising herself bolt-upright, "that's not necessary—that's not at all necessary. Aunty never expected—"

"I am afraid I must take upon myself to be the judge of what is necessary," said Mrs. Rowland with the sweetest smile in the world. Her soft peremptoriness was for her husband as well as for his daughter. For Rowland, too, had responded with a gasp to the suggestion of inviting Jean, and his wife's gentle assumption of supreme authority took him as much by surprise as it did Marion. He began, too, with an anxious "But—," but got no farther. Jean at Rosmore was something which his imagination could not reach.

"*But* is not a word which exists in autocratic countries," said Evelyn laughing. "Constitutional surroundings alone encourage such expressions, and I'll have no dissent in Rosmore. Didn't you hail me Lady as we came over that glorious Firth?" —Evelyn would not perhaps have used the words had she not meant to reduce her husband to instantaneous submission. She thought, indeed, that the Firth was very fine, but her usual principles were against hyperbole. It would be hard, however, to refuse to a good woman the legitimate use of certain weapons because they are used to a large extent by women who are not good. And the "glorious Firth" and his wife's smile together were far more than James Rowland could make head against. I do not think indeed that such artillery was needed. He had not the least objection, but, on the contrary, the greatest pride and pleasure in thinking of her as the autocrat and supreme mistress of Rosmore, to ask any splendid visitor she liked, even royalty, should it cost him half his fortune. It was, however, a little bewildering when it was not royalty but Jean Brown.

"But I don't think she can come," said Marion's little monotonous voice coming in, "so you may put your mind at rest, papa, for she would not like to leave the house with just Bell in it. She is thinking of selling the things, for she will not want to keep up a big house like that when there is nobody but herself, and no allowance; but she will have to take care of them all the more not to let them be spoiled by a servant-lass. And she will think she has not good enough clothes—." Marion here made a very perceptible examination of Mrs. Rowland's dress, which was not "a silk" nor "a satin," but simple gray stuff, and made in the most unassuming way: "I don't see that," she continued with an obvious comparison, "for she has some very nice silks, and she might come very well, so far as that goes. But for another thing, she could not spend the money. When it was for us, she never minded; but she always grudges a railway ticket for herself."

"What do you mean about selling her things, and no allowance?" said Rowland hastily; but he added, "We need not discuss that here. But of course, my dear, what you decide upon must be done."

"So I intend," said Mrs. Rowland, with a laughing bow to him, as of a queen to a king. "We shall have a great deal to settle when we get home, and I hope that everybody will be pleased with my despotism."

"Oh, as for that," said Marion, taking upon herself again the rôle of expositor, "I've always read that a lady should be the mistress in her own side; the gentleman, outside; and she's not to meddle with him; but the lady—"

"I assure you I shall meddle with him, Marion. The flower garden, for instance, I shall take entirely into my hands. In short, I don't know the thing in which I shall not meddle."

"The lady," said Marion, raising her voice a little, "should have all the house to manage, and the children, and all within her own sphere. The books all say that woman's sphere is Home."

"With a great many capital letters."

"You may be meaning some joke with your capital letters, but I'm saying just what I've read. It's nothing about politics nor business—not that kind of thing; but to sit at the fireside and give her orders, and everybody to be at her beck and call."

"Excellent, Marion; you have said your lesson very well, and I hope you mean to be at this lady's beck and call."

"I don't know," said Marion, "that it means the grown-up children: for when you get to be eighteen or so, you are supposed to be able to judge for yourself. But it was no lesson. It was just what I've read in books. I have always been very fond of reading books."

"You could not do better, my dear; and we must read some books together," said Evelyn. Then she thought there had been enough of Marion for the moment. "The woods are beautiful," she said, "and I see, James, the mountains you told me of. Is that Ben Ros—that great shoulder rising over the loch, or the peak in the distance that is so blue and misty? You must tell me when we have time, every name. I think I should prefer to stop the carriage and walk the rest of the way."

"That is just what I would like you to do," said her husband, "for every step's enchanted ground."

Marion did not know what to do, whether to join them in this walk, as curiosity suggested, or to drive home in state, as if it were she who was the mistress of everything. The paths, however, were damp in places, as they usually were, and she reflected that she could walk when she pleased, but that if her pretty white dress was marked with mud, it would have to be washed, and that nothing, not even a white dress, looks so well after it is washed. And also her shoes were thin: they were

worked with beads, and she wore them over a pair of openwork stockings. The boggy parts would be just ruination to her pretty shoes. Mrs. Rowland had strong leather ones, and a gray dress that would take no harm. "For my part," she said, "I would be better in the house, for I have a headache. I would like to come too, but if I got my feet wet, it would give me a cold, and I might never get well."

"By all means drive home," said Evelyn. "Your shoes are much too thin for walking, and see that tea is ready when we come in. Now, James."

He took her away to the opening, from which the loch was visible, and pointed out to her, hill by hill, the whole range, lying under the evening sunshine and the flying shadows; now one peak coming out, now another, now a sudden gleam, like some sun-signal calling forth an unseen knoll into glory, among all the other unnoticed slopes, now a deep purple mantle of royal wealth coming down over the great veiled shoulder of a chosen mountain. During the few minutes they stood there gazing, a hundred transformations took place upon those heights. At what strange games were those Titans playing, veiling themselves, unveiling, retiring into mist, breaking out as with a shout, into the sudden light. Evelyn, for a moment, forgot everything as she gazed at this rapid drama of the hills. She was recalled to herself by the tremble in Rowland's arm as he held hers. He had been as happy and proud in her enthusiasm as if the beloved mountains were part of himself: but there was something more important to him even than the hills. He gave her arm a close pressure as she was silent for a moment, and said close in her ear, with a tremor in his tone, "Evelyn, what do you think of them?"

The question brought her back to a prospect more near and important than the hills, one that she had been glad to put aside for the moment in favour of this wonderful and delightful scene. The moment at least was something gained, and she said to herself that she never would forget it—this first glimpse at the surroundings of her home. The other now had to be faced again, the interior landscape, which was not so delightful. "I think, dear James," she said, "that they are both very shy and very strange between us two. They don't know me at all, and you so little. Nature works, of course, on your side, but even Nature must have a little time. And for me, Nature is rather against me than for me. We must wait before we form any judgment."

"But your first impression is—bad, or if not bad, yet—"

"It is not bad at all! Don't take up false ideas. They are both so shy—"

"Shy! Evelyn! do you think what you are saying? Marion shy!"

"It is because she is shy that she chatters, poor little girl! Did you never know that was a form it took? Archie is silent,

and she chatters. He is a little—rude, and she is a little—talkative. It is all from the same cause. You did not tell me what a pretty little thing she was, James."

"Pretty!—do you think she is pretty? She is not the least of your kind, Evelyn."

"I hope she is of a better kind. Next spring, when she has learned to make her courtesy, and is dressed regardless of expense—for I will take *carte blanche*. I warn you, so far as Marion is concerned—you shall see! She will make a sensation at the drawing-room."

A glow of beatitude came over James Rowland's face. He almost hurt her arm with the pressure he gave it. "You think so? You really think so, Evelyn—before the Queen?" The warmth ran to his very heart, and came back in a sort of dew of happiness to his eyes. His little girl before the Queen! perhaps to be noted by that mother sovereign herself with a kindly eye. *His* child! and he there to look on, paying the homage it would be more than his duty to pay. He stood for a moment clasping Evelyn's arm, too glad to speak. And then—for the pain is more persistent than the pleasure—he added in a low confidential tone, "But the boy—is just a lout, poor lad?" It sounded like an assertion, but it was a question, and of the most anxious kind.

"He is no lout, you unjust, abominable parent. I see at once the eyes you told me of—his mother's eyes."

"One would think, to hear you, that you had seen his mother!"

"I have through your eyes, James. I will never forget that first day. And I thought of her as we came across the Clyde."

"It was more than I did, Evelyn—with you there."

"She must have been there with you often, and thought you were talking nonsense; and now you have got all you ever dreamed of—"

"And more!" he said; "and more!" again pressing her arm.

"And now we have got to make it up," said Evelyn, "to the two whom she has left to you—and to me, through you, James."

"She was an innocent, simple creature, Evelyn!"

"She was your wife, James. Don't go into the house which you have dreamed of for so long without thinking of her who never lived to be its mistress."

Rowland took off his hat. "I had a sore heart to lose my poor Mary," he said; "God bless her in Heaven, where she is; but I have got the best blessing a man can have in Rosmore."

## CHAPTER XXI

MRS. BROWN did not come to Rosmore, though she received a letter from Mrs. Rowland which dissolved her at the first moment of reading in tears and gratitude, but which afterwards she began to fear must have "some motive," though it was difficult to imagine what. For why should the lady be so kind to her? she asked herself. There are a great many good people in the world, and especially women, who are haunted with this idea of a "motive," and cannot shake themselves free of it. Jean was herself an innocent person enough, acting upon impulse continually. But all the more was she anxious to investigate the supposed mysterious meaning and suggestion of self-interest which could have dictated Evelyn's kind and simple letter. "I should have wished that you had come with the children to settle them in their new home, where, of course, there will always be a room for you, their affectionate guardian, who have been a mother to them; but at least I hope you will come now, and that you will approve of all my arrangements for them." It was difficult to find anything in this that could be objected to, and Jean wept over it at first, as has been said; but then her habitual distrust came in. "What will the woman be wanting with me? It will be to give herself credit with Jims, and throw a' the blame on me—but I'll no fa' into the snare," she said to herself, falling into it instantly, if snare it was. When Archie appeared in the afternoon to fetch her, she shook her head. "Na, na, I'm no gaun—no a fit. It's just some plan for exposing your poor mammaw's family, and letting him see we're not to be evened to *her*. No, no, I will never set my fit within Rosmore."

Archie himself, though he had gone to Glasgow on Mrs. Rowland's gentle compulsion to escort his aunt, was not perhaps very anxious that she should come. Though he was full of affection for her, it is to be feared that already the cold eye of the butler had worked its effect upon Archie. He felt himself grow red and a cold dew come over his forehead when he thought of that functionary holding his silver dish at Mrs. Brown's elbow. What unutterable things would be in his eye! Archie felt that Morris looked at himself with a pitying wonder. What, then, would he feel for Mrs. Brown? Therefore he was not disposed to press the matter. As for Mrs. Rowland, the lively prejudice with which he had met her, had been kept up with difficulty in her presence, and he could throw no light on the motive she could have in asking Mrs. Brown. There was, alas, no difficulty whatever in proving to the most casual observer that Mr. Rowland's family, which in this case was Mrs. Brown's family, could not in any way be "evened" to the new wife who was supreme at Rosmore. To bring Mrs. Brown

to make that doubly sure was a work of supererogation. Archie did not say this to his aunt, but with a burning sense of disadvantages which he had never suspected before he felt it in his own breast.

"And how is Mey getting on?" said Jean, when this question was decided.

"Oh, well enough. She is just copying everything she sees, like a little parrot, as she is."

"There's no harm in that," said Jean, "for I suppose the leddy's real well-bred and a' that. It would be nothing but that he marriet her for. He was aye an ambitious man, Jimis Rowland. But eh! he's a good-hearted man—just ower good. I got a letter from him this morning, and he says the allowance will just go on, and I'm to keep the house, and make myself comfortable."

Jean's ready tears flowed forth upon this argument. "It's awfu' kind," she sobbed; "I wouldn't say a word against one of them, nor do a thing to vex him. If he had been my ain brother, he couldn't have been more kind—I'm just at my ease for life; and if you could tell me ony thing I could do to please him—"

"Maybe it would please him," said Archie doubtfully, "if you were to come to Rosmore."

"Na, na, I'll no do that—just to graitify that prideful woman. But ye can tell him that I want the house for his, and that whatever use can be made of it to send things to, or to come for a night's lodging instead of one of thae dear hotels—it will be ready. There will be beds ready, and linen aired ready to put on, night and day," said Mrs. Brown in the fervour of her gratitude. "And ye can say to *her*, Archie, that I'm very much obliged, but that I have not sleepit out of my own house for years, which is just the real truth, as ye can certify, though maybe it's no just the reason in the present case; and ye may say I will be glad to see her if she comes to Gleskie—which is no perhaps exactly the case, but we maun be ceevil. Mind, ye must always be ceevil, whatever happens. It would give her a grand hold upon ye, if ye were ever wanting in respec'."

"I've no reason to think she's wanting any hold upon me," said Archie, with a little irritation.

"Eh!" said his aunt, holding up a warning finger, "she's laying her spell on you too! I'll no go near her, or she might make a fool o' me. It's easy enough to make a fool o' me. I just greet at a kind word—I canna help mysel. When I got her letter wi' a' its fine words, I just grat till I was blin'; but then I asked myself what for should she be that ceevil to me?"

"It was maybe only for kindness after all," said Archie.

"Dinna you be a born idiot to trust in that. Na, na, it's no without a motive, take my word for it," Jean said.

It was hard, however, for the closest observer to find out what the motive could be. Evelyn had no small effort to make to

overcome her own natural objections to the society of the two young people, one of whom studied her like a pattern book, while the other eyed her from his corner with a hostility scantily veiled by that attempt to be "ceevil" which his aunt had enjoined upon him. Archie's attitude, however, was on the whole less trying than that of Marion, who studied and copied Mrs. Rowland's manners, her tone, as far as she could master it, her little tricks of gesture, till Evelyn became ridiculous to herself; which is a very curious experience. When she saw little Marion with her slight person throw back her head as Evelyn was aware she had herself the habit of doing, and drop her hand by her side, which was another peculiarity, swaying it slightly as she walked, a trick for which Evelyn had suffered much in her youth, the laugh which burst from her in spite of herself was not pleasant. Evelyn was tall, while Marion was little; she was forty, and Marion was eighteen. She belonged a little, she was aware, to a by-gone school, which had been stately rather than piquant, and Marion's infantile prettiness was adapted to a quite different principle. It was ludicrous to watch growing and increasing day by day the travesty of herself which was before her eyes in her husband's little girl. Sometimes her impatience with the copy was so great that the woman's instincts of outraged personality were upon her, and she could have seized and shaken the folly out of the little flatterer and imitator. But I need not say that this was the merest flutter of nerves on Evelyn's part, and that she never really departed from her *rôle* of patience. The worst of it was that James began gradually to perceive, and not only to perceive, but regard with delight, this imitative process. "I really think she is growing a little like you, Evelyn!" he said, when his wife had been driven nearly to an end of her toleration, and it was all she could do to keep from her countenance a contraction—which Marion would probably have reproduced next day, to the confusion of all concerned.

In this way, however, a great superficial improvement was notable in the girl. She learned in an inconceivably short time how to manage all the circumstances of her changed life, adapting herself to everything as one to the manner born. No temptation of being respectful to the butler ever came to Marion. She treated him and the rest of the fine servants as if they were cabbages; which was her rendering of the easy and genial indifference with which Mrs. Rowland received the services she had never been accustomed to consider extraordinary. Evelyn's manner to the maid in her room, though she might not say a word to her, was the easy composure of a woman perfectly considerate and friendly, and ready on any occasion to show her natural interest in the fellow-creature so near to her, both by word and deed. But Marion's indifference went the length of insult, though she had no intention of anything but to follow exactly her stepmother's example. The demeanour of the one

was just that kind of quiet familiar affability and ease which characterizes a relationship in which there is no desire, on the part of the superior at least, for any more demonstration than is felt, or unnecessary intercourse ; but Marion's was a kind of brutality by which the inferior was made to feel as if she had no existence at all except as a ministrant to certain wants. Thus the little girl achieved that polish of the Tartar, which, when scratched, shows the savage through.

Archie was not at all of this kind. And sometimes when Evelyn looked up suddenly and found him with his averted head, shoulder turned the side she was sitting on, and blank of dull opposition, she felt it almost a relief. Now and then some sentiment on her part, something quite unthought of which she said or did, and which probably had no connection whatever with himself, would make him look full at her with those eyes which Rowland had called his mother's eyes—the honest soft blue, not too profound, but clear as the sky, in which at least the perception of the heart was not wanting, whether it was accompanied or not by any higher light of the spirit. What Archie knew or did not know it was difficult to say, for he never spoke when he could help it, and then chiefly in answer to questions which were seldom of an intellectual kind. Something had been said at first about the University, or rather, as both Archie and his father called it, "the College," which meant, as Evelyn came slowly to understand, the same thing—only so far different that Glasgow or Edinburgh was the University meant, and not Oxford or Cambridge. That his son should go to "the College" had been Rowland's intent, but the idea seemed to drop all the more completely, of course, that it was the summer vacation, and nothing could be done for the moment. Archie, however, instead of exerting himself like Marion to acquire a new, if it should happen to be a fictitious standing ground, remained a sort of unknown quantity in his father's house. With all the efforts she could make, Evelyn did not succeed in forming anything but the most slight acquaintance with her stepson, and neither (which was more extraordinary still) did his father attain to more than an acquaintance. Sometimes Archie would be drawn into an expression of opinion on a political subject, which naturally was, as a rule, in opposition to his father, and at once crushed by him ; upon which the boy with not unnatural wrath returned into his shell more closely than before. One time, indeed, Evelyn had found herself on the very verge of attaining his confidence, or so at least she thought. It was on the day—momentous day—when Rankin judged the two little dogs to be sufficiently mature to be sent home to their master. They were brought up to the great door, which was at one end of the colonnade. Nothing more amusing could be than the two little bundles of fur and fun deposited at her feet by Sandy the groom, who was delighted with his errand, though a little discomposed to find nobody but "the mistress."

"They'll be for the young gentleman," he said shamefaced.

"What delightful little things," said Evelyn, who, like all well-conditioned persons, loved dogs. "Go and find Mr. Archibald, Sandy. I'll take care of them till he comes."

When Archie appeared in great haste and for once glowing with pleasure, he found her seated in the centre of a great rug on the floor of the hall with the two little dogs in convulsions of delight beside her, barking, biting, rolling and struggling upon the soft carpet, and undaunted with the something so unknown to them—a lady in a soft silken dress to play with. Perhaps the little things recognized only this of Evelyn's many excellences, that she wore an exceptionally soft gown—not like Jenny Rankin's rough homespun. Dogs are very susceptible to this superiority of texture.

"Come and look at your doggies, Archie," she said without looking up. "I have taken possession of them, or they have taken possession of me. Where did you find such delights? There is nothing so nice as a puppy, except a baby perhaps—and you, I know, would not appreciate that."

"Why would I not appreciate that?" said Archie roughly (being thereto moved by suggestions from Aunty Jean).

Mrs. Rowland gave a glance up at the clouded countenance of the sullen boy, surprised but saying nothing, and he ended as he generally did when alone with her, by feeling ashamed of himself.

"They're Rankin's doggies—a particular breed," he added more civilly than usual to make up. "He's the old gamekeeper, and he's given himself up to dogues ever since his accident."

This was quite a long speech for Archie to make.

"He has given himself up to it with great success," said Evelyn. "You must take me to see him. These are just at the most delightful stage. I said there was nothing so nice except a baby. But kittens are almost as nice before they grow to be cats."

"They cannot be so nice," said Archie, "because they do grow to be cats; and these will be dogues when they're grown up."

Evelyn pondered a little over this dogmatic proposition before she answered: "You put it in an original way, but I think I agree with you, Archie. And what are these little things called—or have they got names—or shall we confer some on the spot?"

"Rankin hasn't much imagination: he calls them just Roy and Dhu—that means red and black in Gaelic. But you spell the last D-h-u."

"Roy and Dhu are very good names," said Evelyn. "I would keep to them, I think: they sound well even if Rankin has not much imagination."

"He has a great deal of Gaelic," said Archie: "he writes things in papers about poetry and stuff. He discourses to me sometimes, but I never mind."

"Then you don't care for poetry and stuff?"

"How should I, in Gaelic, which I don't understand?" The conversation, however, was thus getting upon general topics, which Archie eschewed, and he suddenly awoke to the danger of being drawn into a tête-à-tête with his stepmother. "The dogues will be spoiling your dress, and a bother to you."

"I have never confessed to your father," she said, "that I am very fond of dogs. I don't think he likes them. Suppose you and I set up a little kennel of our own. You will want dogs for the shooting when the time comes, and I have not seen one about the place."

"No, there are none. Gilmour—that's the gamekeeper—has two or three. He says there's a good deal of shooting," said Archie, led out of himself by the interest of this subject, about which he had gleaned a little further information. It excited and charmed the lad, for he was full of eagerness to do things like other young men of his age, but afraid to show his ignorance to begin with.

"Your father has not said much about it. He is not a shooting man, you know. You will have to go out with the gamekeeper and bring us our first grouse."

"I'll not bring in many grouse," he said almost under his breath.

"You are not a good shot? Never mind: you are young enough to mend that. The great thing is to keep cool and not get flurried, I believe."

"Oh, I don't suppose lassies"—he corrected himself quickly with a violent blush—"ladies know much about it."

"Perhaps not," said Evelyn, "but my father was one of the best shots in Northamptonshire. It is not a very great distinction," she added with a smile. "I could quite forgive a man for not shooting at all."

"It's no a crime," said Archie, as if to himself, and with a tone of defiance.

"Oh no, quite the reverse—neither one way nor another. I think," she added with a little hesitation, "that your father, though he does not shoot himself, would be pleased if you showed a little enthusiasm about it. Forgive me for saying so. It is worth while taking a little trouble to please him, he cares so much—"

"Not for me," said Archie, setting his pale face within his high collar like a rock.

"Oh, you silly boy!—more for you in that way than for any living creature. And very naturally, for are not you his heir—his successor—to represent him in anything he does not do himself?"

"For pride, then," said Archie, throwing down rather roughly upon the rug one of the dogs with which he was playing, "not for anything else."

"Oh, poor little doggie," said Evelyn, seeing it inexpedient to

continue this subject, and then she added more lightly, "What are they to be called then, Archie? Roy and Dhu?"

"Whatever you like," cried the young man. "I care nothing for them now: they are just little brutes that fawn on anybody. You may call them Red and Black, if you like, like the cards. I don't care if I never saw them more."

And he turned upon his heel and strode away. But these were words too dignified and tragical to suit with Archie's appearance, which was not that of the hero of romance who grandly does those things. To turn on your heel and stride away, you ought to be six feet at least, with chest and shoulders to match. Archie was about five feet six, stooped, and was badly dressed. He had not yielded to any soft compulsion on this point, as Marion had done so easily. He had begun to perceive it himself, nay, he could see that the youngest footman's cut of livery suit was better than his. But he clung to his old suit all the same.

The shooting which Mr. Rowland had taken along with Rosmore was not very great—a few grouse on the hillside, a few partridges late in the season, some pheasants as tame as poultry in those delightful woods which were so pleasant to wander in (when your shoes were thick and you did not mind the damp), but not sufficient to entertain many birds. I don't know how rich men generally who have made their money, and have not been used to those luxuries, arrange about the shooting in the fine "places" which they buy and retire to when their portion is made—whether they fall naturally into the habit of it, and shoot like the other gentlemen, or whether it is a matter that lies heavy on their mind. It certainly lay very heavy on the mind of Archie, who was too shy to acknowledge that he knew nothing about that mode of exercise, and therefore went out with the keeper when the dreadful moment came in great perturbation, not frightened, indeed, for his gun, or for shooting himself, which would have been a certain deliverance, but for cutting a ridiculous figure in the eyes of Roderick, the game-keeper, who talked to him, the inexperienced Glasgow boy, as he would have talked to any young gentleman who had been accustomed to the moors from his cradle. Archie did not reflect that Roderick knew perfectly where he had come from and how he had been bred, and that this assumption that he knew all about it was indeed pure ridicule on the keeper's part, which would have been completely divested of its sting if the lad had possessed sufficient courage to say that he was a novice. But he did not, and the consequence was a few days of utter humiliation and weariness, after which Archie became painfully capable of shooting within a few yards of the bird, and once actually brought down a rabbit, to his great exultation yet remorse. Poor rabbit, what had it done to have its freedom and its life thus cut short? But the lad durst no more express this sentiment than he durst say that he had never fired a gun in his life before that terrible Twelfth when he went out for the first time

on the hillside and barked his unaccustomed shins, and made his arms ache and his head swim with the fatiguing, sickening, hopeless day. Rowland had been warned that there was no game to be had which would justify him in inviting company. "Me and the young gentleman—twa guns—we will want nae mair—just enough to keep up a bit supply for the hoose," Roderick said, with a twinkle in his eye. And as Archie made no protest, his father thought that somehow or other the boy who had never had anything to do all his life must know how to manage his gun.

There were some ideas of going out to the hill with luncheon, which Evelyn, however, seeing the terror and despair at once in the lad's eyes, discouraged.

"No," she said, "men only pretend to like it when there's a party : they never like it when they mean serious work."

"Do you ever desire work, Archie?" said his father. "Come in with a good bag, there's a good fellow."

"If I might speak a word, sir," said Roderick, "the finest fallow in the world will no bring up a cheeper if there's nane to come."

"Well, well, start early, and good luck to you," said Rowland.

And they all came out to meet the pair returning in the afternoon, Archie more dead than alive, with his hands blistered, and his shins scratched, and the look of absolute exhaustion on his face, but somehow with a bird or two in his bag which he was not conscious of, still less of how they got there.

"Ou ay, there's aye a hare or twa," said the gamekeeper ; "but it was very warm on the hill, and Mr. Archibald is not used to the work, as few gentlemen are the first day. I'll take your gun, sir, and I'll take your bag, and the ladies will give ye a lift hame."

Archie obeyed, and clambered into the carriage, the most dilapidated sportsman, perhaps, that the evening of the twelfth ever saw.

"Well, sir, had ye good sport?" said his father, feeling a glow of pride in the performances of the boy.

"Oh, I don't know if you call that good sport," the lad said with a gasp.

But this was set down to modesty, or fatigue, or crossness, which unfortunately had grown of late to be a recognized quality of Archie. And Mr. Rowland himself took down a brace of grouse to the Manse next morning, a proud father handing out "my son's birds," as if Archie had been the finest shot in the world. But this was not Archie's fault, who knew nothing of the transaction. He managed to be able to carry his gun like other feeble sportsmen after that terrible initiation. Thus both Mr. Rowland's children learned to adapt themselves to the duties of their new sphere.

## CHAPTER XXII

ROWLAND'S ideas of the absence of society in his new home were confounded by the number of visits his wife received within the first six weeks of their stay at Rosmore. It had, I have no doubt, been noised abroad that the wife of the great railway man was, in the loose but convenient phraseology of the time, "a lady," and that there was therefore no appreciable peril to the gentility of her caller, from making her acquaintance. Lady Jean, of course, was one of the first to call upon her brother's tenant. Her arrival was attended by circumstances of which James Rowland could never think afterwards without shame and humiliation. Indeed it all but happened to him to turn the little shabby old lady who was trudging through the woods in short petticoats and a waterproof to the kitchen door as the natural entrance. Lady Jean was a little woman of about fifty, who had long ceased to take the least pride in her appearance, or to care what people thought on the subject. This last presumption was of course quite unnecessary in the parish of Rosmore, where everybody knew who she was, and where, had she gone about in cloth of gold, it would have made no particular difference. She wore tweed accordingly with the most reckless indifference to quality (I believe the quality was generally good—it came in bales from Romans and Paterson, which the Glasgow shopkeepers thought disloyal to them, and unpatriotic)—one society gown after another being manufactured for her as need arose; and she was fond of giving a gown-piece to any girl that might strike her fancy, walked well, and was, as she expressed it in pregnant Scotch, "purpose-like." This is not to say that Lady Jean could not be every inch the Earl's sister when occasion demanded, and strike terror into the Radical multitude, or that she did not possess, and occasionally wear, a wardrobe more fitted to her condition.

Her arrival at Rosmore had nearly led to disastrous effects, as I have said. For when Mr. Rowland saw the little old lady nimbly climbing the hill, with the tweed petticoats reaching to her ankles, and her hat bearing traces of encounters with several showers, he had not a doubt in his mind that she was a friend of the housekeeper or some of the servants. He had said "Hi!" and he was hurrying along partly out of kindness, for the way to the servants' entrance was shorter than the one which swept round to the front of the house, when he saw Archie meet and pause to answer the old lady's questions. His father, deeply critical, yet not so critical as he would have been had he known who the visitor was, saw his son turn and accompany her, taking off his hat, which Rowland thought unnecessary (though to be over civil was always better than being rude), not to the servants' door, but up to the left hand, to the front of the house.

He had another “Hi!” on his very lips, but stopped, thinking he might as well leave it to Archie, no great harm being possible. If the housekeeper’s friend did get admission at the great door, what then? He gave a regretful thought to the evident fact that Archie was more at home with the old lady than he was with people in his own position. Mr. Rowland shook his head sadly over this, and said to himself that it was in the boy’s blood, and that he would never make a gentleman: yet comforted himself next moment and justified Archie by declaring to himself with some warmth that he had a better opinion of a lad when he was civil to those who had but little claim to the civility of their neighbours.

Consequent upon this, however, a little curiosity about this old lady came into Rowland’s mind. She was perhaps some ancient sempstress—some old pensioner of “the family,” which was a title only accorded by the public in general to the Clydesdale family, not to the interlopers at present at the house. The old person was very nimble, whoever she was, and she had “neat feet,” Mr. Rowland remarked, who had always an eye for a good point in a woman—very neat feet—shod with strong, purpose-like shoes. If Marion would only learn to have shoes like that instead of the things like paper she went about in. He went on very much at his leisure, following till the old lady disappeared under the colonnade. It would do her good to get a glimpse of the hall with its Indian carpets and wonderful hangings. It’s fine to show a poor old body like that once in a way what wealth can do. It would be a thing for her to make a great gossip about in the village when she got home. Mr. Rowland was still smiling with the pleasure of this benevolent view when he saw Archie come out again. “Who is that old dame you were showing in? I’m glad to see you so civil,” said the father.

“Civil!” said the young man. And then he added with his usual look of suppressed indignation, “I’m surprised you did not know her: it is Lady Jean.”

“Lady Jean!!” But a thousand notes of admiration could not express the dismay of Rowland when he found out that he had very nearly called out “Hi!” to Lady Jean.

Lady Jean was greatly pleased with Mrs. Rowland, whom she described as “probably a little too English for this place—but very well meaning, and a gentlewoman. It appears I once knew her grandmother,” said Lady Jean. This, so far as the point was concerned, was as good as a patent of nobility. Her grandmother!—it added the charm of antiquity to all the rest—though, indeed, Lady Jean was not more than a dozen years older than Mrs. Rowland. Evelyn had besought the Earl’s sister to let her take charge of “the poor” in the village, which gave Lady Jean occasion for a lecture, which pleased her. “But I must ask you not to call them the poor. They are neighbours not so well off in this world’s goods as we are. ‘Poor folk’ is an allowable

phrase, meaning a large class ; and it is mostly neighbourly kindness, not charity, that you will be called on to give. Something off your own table to the sick and ailing—that's a fashion of speaking—something off your housekeeper's table, not French dishes, will be the best, and a helping hand with the schooling, and a kind thought of the old people. That is what you want here."

"But that is very much what is wanted everywhere," Evelyn said.

"Very true, but there are Scotch susceptibilities which you must respect," said Lady Jean. She liked to make this explanation, and then to laugh at it, with a twinkle in her eye.

But her conclusion was that Mrs. Rowland was a most creditable person. "Rich, oh, richer than anybody has a right to be—but not much the worse, considering—just a well-looking, well-mannered gentlewoman."

Nothing could be more satisfactory than this report. It ran up the loch and across the mountains. The Duchess heard of it in her quarters among the hills. It flew east to another duchess on the lowland side. Of course I need not say to people who know the country which was the one duchess and which the other. In the course of time they both called, which was a prodigious distinction : and so did all the smaller gentry, and some of those great Glasgow potentates who build themselves new castles upon the banks of the Clyde. Some of them were very fine gentlemen indeed, but they were "mixed," and some were only "Glasgow builders" of a kind quite unknown to Evelyn. One whose carriage would have made a sensation in Hyde Park, even in the days of hammer-cloth, with two powdered footmen behind, had the manners still of the blacksmith he had originally been. Mr. Rowland rather liked these personages, especially the old gentleman who had been a blacksmith. He stood up in a group with two or three of them who represented among them heaven knows how many millions, and thrust his hands into his pockets and talked investments and money. Why should not people talk money who have more of that than of anything else ? Painters talk of their pictures, and literary men of their books. Why not millionaires of that which makes them so ? Rowland was very intelligent, and he liked to talk upon money subjects ; but an occasional laying of the heads together with a few other rich men over the subject of money was refreshing to him, as it is refreshing to an artist after long deprivation to find himself once more among his own kind.

With all this flash of fine society, however, which so soon made an end of Rowland's fears, it is astounding how much in the foreground of the picture was Miss Eliza, briefly described as "of the Burn," in the nomenclature of the parish. What Miss Eliza's surname was, and what was implied by the designation "of the Burn," it was really quite unnecessary to add. The same surname is so very general in Scotch west-country parishes, that

it confers little distinction in itself. Miss Eliza came to call in a little wickerwork carriage, called a clothes-basket by her friends, with a russet pony to draw it and an equally russet groom or stable-boy to look after the vehicle when she made a call. Miss Eliza drove the pony herself, with Colin generally behind, to whom she threw a word occasionally when a longer time than usual elapsed without meeting anybody on the road : but as the kind woman knew everybody, from the fishwife who came over with her creels from Kilrossie during the season of the saut water, up to the Earl himself, when he happened to be seen in those regions, or even the Duchess, who was a still more rare visitor, there was but little time for her to entertain Colin with a special remark. "How do you do the day?" she said with a wave of her whip in salutation of her friends. "How's a' with you, David? I hope the hoast is better, and that you like the lozenges.—Good morning, Mrs. Dean, and isn't it just a pleasure to see such a fine day : grand for the hay, as I have been saying all the way down the loch, fifty times if I've said it once. I'm hoping they'll get it all well carted in at Rowanson, and a fine heavy crop it is, just a pleasure to see.—Eh, is that you, Lizzie, with your basket? It's awfu' heavy for you, my poor lass, and you not got up your strength yet. Climb up beside Colin: I'll take ye a bittie of the way.—Good day to ye, minister. Ye see I've got Lizzie Chalmers in the basket. Ye must just give her a good talking to, for she's come out before she has got up her strength. Would you like any of her fish at the Manse? I would call and leave them on my way back, with pleasure, and it would aye be something for her to take home. I will have some of the herrings and the little haddies myself, though the haddies are not equal to the Fife haddies, and the herrings are not so good as Loch Fyne. Oh yes, I am just going to Rosmore. I hear she's just an uncommon nice person, and a credit to the loch-side.—Dear me, there's Lady Jean. It's a sight for sore eyes to see you now, and a sore trouble to think you're in the parish no longer, and I can scarcely offer to give you a lift when I have Lizzie Chalmers in the cart. Isn't she just a very presentable sort of person? I'm meaning the new lady at the house, no Lizzie: we all know everything there is to know about her. And I hope his lordship is quite well, and you are not finding Ardnachrean damp.—Dear, bless me, there is the doctor, and I want to ask him about young Rankin, and make him speak his mind to Lizzie there. Good-day to you all, good-day."

If it may be suggested that a country lady driving her own machine could scarcely be likely to meet so much company on a country road, I must say in my own defence that it was the same day on which Lady Jean had paid her visit to Mrs. Rowland, which accounted for her; and as for the usual inhabitants of Rosmore, from the minister down to old David, they were all to be met with in the afternoon, within a few hundred yards.

Lizzie Chalmers, it is true, was from Kilrossie, and did not come every day, but she was the only one of the party with the exception of Lady Jean who was not to be met with about the same hour on the same road every day.

"Is he any better, doctor?" said Miss Eliza, coming down upon the doctor with a little rush of the russet pony, prompted by a smarter than ordinary flourish of the whip. "Yes, I was afraid it was his own fault, the foolish fellow. Men are just idiots rushing upon destruction, and him so sensible when he is *himself*. There is Lizzie Chalmers, behind me in the basket, just as silly in another way, coming out with her heavy creel before she is well over her trouble. I would wish you to speak very seriously to her, doctor. You must just lay me out my herrings and haddies, and the codfish for the manse, it will make your creel the lighter. And Colin, fill you that long basket with grass to make a nice caller bed for the fish.—And here we are at the gate of Rosmore, and to take you further would just be to take you out of your way. Help her out, Colin, and you can put out the biggest codfish—if it's too much for them, I'll make them a present of it, and they can send the rest to that ne'er-do-well's poor wife, poor thing. And Lizzie, my woman, here's another shilling for you. Stay at home and look after the bairns, and don't come out to-morrow. Now, Rufus, on you go, my man. It's a stiff brae, and I know you don't like it; but we'll just make Colin get out and run. Come away, my bonnie man," said Miss Eliza, with a chirrup, as she slanted the pony's head towards the brae. Having no one else to speak to, she talked to Rufus, who was very well used to it, and responded by little shakings of his head and jinglings of his harness. "Come away," she added, meaning "go on." "It's a stey brae, but ye must just go at it with a stout heart, and it will be over in a moment. Come away, my bonnie man! Just jump in, Colin, and not let him cool after that fine burst, for I like to come in at the door with a dash, and Rufus can do it if he likes. Now down with ye again, and give a good peal to the bell.—Will Mrs. Rowland be in this afternoon?" she added, with a sweep of the whip towards the footman at the door. Then Miss Eliza got down a little more dexterously than an inexperienced spectator would have looked for. She went into Rosmore in the same cheerful manner, talking all the way. The footman, it is true, was English, and an unknown quantity, but even to him Miss Eliza found something to say.

"They will be in, both Mrs. Rowland and the young lady? That is very lucky for me, for in a fine day like this most people are on the road. They will be using the long drawing-room with the view? Well, I do not blame them: it is best, though Lady Jean used to keep it for company.—Who will ye say? Oh, there is my card, that is the most sensible way.—My dear Mrs. Rowland, I am very glad to make your acquaintance. We have heard just everything that is good of you, and I have been

most anxious to welcome you to the parish. And this is Miss Rowland? Dear me, how delighted all the young folk will be to hear of such an addition. And now that you have got settled down a little, I hope you like the house?"

"The house is delightful," said Evelyn, "and so are the views. My husband prepared me for the beauty of the country, but he said very little about the excellence inside."

"He would know but little," said Miss Eliza. "They're not noticing about houses, the men folk. And as for the views, we have been settled here this forty years since we came quite young creatures ourselves; but I've never tired of this. I've never got indifferent, as you generally do, with what you've seen every day: it's just as new to me now as it was at the first."

"It is a beautiful country," said Evelyn civilly.

"Is it not—just a blessed country! Eh, if the people were but equal. 'Every prospect pleases,' you remember the hymn says, 'and only man—' No, no, I will not say that man is vile: that is a great deal too strong. What I complain of in very religious folk is that they are censuring their neighbours, when perhaps, if the truth was known, their neighbours— But we must not pursue that subject. Man is not vile, but he's not so satisfying as the everlasting hills."

"Oh," said Marion, with the little fictitious intonation which copied Evelyn's, "but men are more amusing than the mountains." She herself was not by any means so amusing in her diction since she had become an echo of Mrs. Rowland in her gesture and voice.

"The young ladies," said Miss Eliza with a laugh, "are mostly of that opinion, and I should not say nay, for I have not less than six nephews coming to-morrow for tennis, and everything that they can find that is diverting. They are either at the college, for there's a summer session in the scientific classes, or else they're in offices, and they come down to us on Saturday to play. I hope you'll come up to the Burn, you and your brother, to meet my young men. There will be a view or two as well. And after the diversion there will be a kind of supper, and then they will see you home."

Marion did not know how to act in such an emergency, but it was understood that the invitation was accepted. And Miss Eliza returned after half an hour's talking, full of the genius of the mistress of the house, and the wealth of its fitting up. "There would need to be something very sustaining in the sense of good old blood in your veins, and a family that has existed for generations," she said, "for if I was Lady Jean, I could not bear to see how the house is changed, just by the railway man. For it was always a bare, cauldridge sort of house. I used to feel that there were not carpets enough on the floor, nor coals enough in the grate. Now it's just all blazing and shining with warmth—curtains that just clothe the place, and pictures on

the walls, and grand carpets that your foot sinks in. It may not be such good taste, but it is far more comfortable. And Mrs. Rowland is a most personable woman, and him a very good sort of a man."

"And the daughter, Aunt Eliza?" cried the miss, to whom this was the most interesting part of all.

"The daughter—well she's just a young lady like the rest. I asked her to come to-morrow, and you can judge for yourself," Miss Eliza said.

The minister and his wife formed a still more interesting part of the immediate society of the little place, and puzzled Evelyn, who had been brought up in the somewhat narrow creed of her country to ignore everything but "the Church," and to look with small respect upon dissenters in general as a community of uneducated people. She did not at all know what to make of the trim and well-dressed pair who called upon her, he in garments almost more sacerdotal than if he had been a priest of All Saints, Elizabeth Street, and she with the fashionable cut of her dress shadowed by the inevitable mackintosh. This was the Scotch minister whom she had met with in pictures in a very different aspect, but of whom she knew nothing in real life except that she had a puzzled comprehension that he did not belong to "the Church," but yet was—what was he?—a kind of vicar or rector after another fashion, like yet quite unlike the vicars and rectors whom she knew. Mrs. Rowland had her limitations like others, and did not know what to think. But she was, as ever, charmingly polite, and did her best to please these bewildering neighbours. She apologized for not having yet been to church, giving some excuse of tiredness or headache. As a matter of fact the headache had been a result of the same bewilderment which made her so curious and so unassured about the position of Mr. Dean. A Scottish gentlewoman in England would have had no such ignorance; which is a curious fact, and one, perhaps, which proves the superiority of the wealthier and more remote ecclesiastical economy.

"I dare say," said Mrs. Dean, "that you were not sure if you should come to our church. There is an Episcopalian Chapel in Kilrossie. As you are English, Mrs. Rowland, it's perhaps there you should go."

"Indeed, I cannot say," said Evelyn, "I have never gone anywhere but to the parish church—but—I don't quite understand—"

"We both understand perfectly," said Mrs. Dean, "that you would miss the ritual and your beautiful prayer-book. We have a great sympathy for that. There is nothing in the prayer-book, I am sure, that would be a stumbling-block to my husband, and he sometimes takes a collect just straight out of it without any kind of clipping or trimming. There is a great movement in Scotland, which perhaps you are not acquainted with, to improve the baldness of our services, and make them

more generally attractive. We have a harmonium," Mrs. Dean said with pride, "and I am happy to say that our choir is beginning to chant just extraordinarily well. You will see no such terrible difference as maybe you think."

Evelyn held her peace, being more and more bewildered with every word. She wondered what Mrs. Reuben Butler, *née* Jeanie Deans, who was once the minister's wife of this parish, would have thought of this statement. She only bowed in reply, not being for her own part at all qualified to speak.

"Alexander will explain to you far better than I can, and you will find no intolerance in him. He perhaps agrees better with you," she added, with a smile, "than with the old-fashioned folk who insist upon keeping up all the difference.—Alexander, Mrs. Rowland would like you to explain the way we're trying to bridge over the debateable land between our establishment and the other. Just come here. I will change places with you." The good wife, with these words, rose and took a chair beside Rowland, to whom her husband had been talking, which was very self-denying on the part of the minister's wife, there being nothing at all novel in the gentleman of the house, whereas there was a great deal that was novel in the lady, and therefore interesting. She relinquished the post to the minister, who was perhaps better able to expound—was he better able to expound?—the problem of that ecclesiastical movement in Scotland which is so much more puzzling to unsophisticated English understandings, prepared for polemics and opposition, than the good old conventional figure of the Presbyterian Calvinist, which is a primitive type that everybody knows.

"I don't know what there is to explain," said Mr. Dean, taking, nothing loth, the chair his wife had vacated: he too preferred the mistress to the master of the house. "Our services—but then Mrs. Rowland will understand them better when she has seen them."

"Oh, I was very tired after my long journey—and I had a headache."

"She was not out of her bed," replied Rowland, as if his wife were being blamed.

"I am sure," said Mr. Dean, "that if I was Mrs. Rowland, I should not go through the tedious drawl of the old-fashioned Scotch church on any account, or listen to a sermon an hour long, which is what some of our neighbouring clergymen still indulge in. But it is modified in Rosmore church, and I promise you you shall not have more of me than twenty minutes. We have very decent music, thanks to my wife. In short, for a country service in an out-of-the-way place like this, I'm glad to think that we are making it much more attractive."

"Attractive?" Evelyn said, more bewildered than ever. "To whom were they intended to be attractive? To the persons to whom they were addressed?"

"It is in no way necessary," said the minister, "that music

and everything that is pleasant should be appropriated by one body. We can take up our inheritance in that way just as fitly as the Episcopalians. I am not a bigoted Presbyterian," he said, "even in the way of Church government, which is really the only peculiar part of our economy. I think it is just as good as the other. I don't think that either of them is divinely appointed. I am used to presbytery, you are used to bishops—very well. We need not go to loggerheads about that. I know a bishop or two, and I've always found them very friendly, without being inclined to bow down to kiss the pastoral ring any more than the papal toe."

"You are not so peaceably inclined when you come home from a Presbytery meeting, Alexander," said the wife of his bosom. "For my part I am rather fond of the lawn sleeves. I think equality of ministers is just as great nonsense as equality generally. Don't you think so, Mr. Rowland? When young Lord Rosmore says to me we are all born equal, I just say to him, Bah! As if anybody in his senses would put my husband and Johnny Shanks at the head of the loch upon the same level! You will remember Johnny Shanks? just a nobody; whereas Alexander——"

"My wife," said Mr. Dean, while this was going on, "likes the decorative side. Lawn sleeves and gaitered legs take her fancy. But if there is one thing convenient in our simplicity, it is that we are saved all the millinery questions. And that, I think, goes for a great deal."

Evelyn had never been ecclesiastically minded, and was but vaguely aware what the millinery question meant. As for the rest, though she was an intelligent woman, these two people might as well have talked Hebrew to her: there was no understanding in her mind.

### CHAPTER XXIII

It was October when the young Saumarez's arrived at Rosmore. October is very lovely in the west of Scotland. The trees are thinned but still glowing, the birches like lamps of gold among the darker woods, scattering round them, as the leaves drop, a golden underground that gives out light. The great line of mountains at the head of the loch were lightly touched with snow. The villas on the banks came out more brightly from the thinned foliage, and stood reflected in the shining water, with all the tints round them of red rowan berries and dazzling autumnal leaves. The air had a clearness as of the rarified air of high altitudes. There had not been any rain for ten days, so remarkable a fact that the district in general was beginning to fear the failure of its wells.

In such an evening, while the sun lavished its last rays upon

the loch and the opposite shore, bathing them in golden light, Rosamond and Edward came across in the steamboat to the whole Rowland family, which awaited them on the pier. I am wrong, however, to say the whole family : for Archie, who had been seized by a strong repugnance to the newcomers without any reason—a fact which, of course, made it more strong—was not of the number. He had gone up the loch or the hill with a determined intention of returning only in time for dinner. If truth had been told, he was extremely curious, even anxious, about the young man who was of his own age, about whom there could be no doubt that he was a gentleman born to everything which Archie had not been born to, yet possessed. He did not think at all about the pretty sister, who probably would have most engaged the interest of the ordinary youth of twenty. But the more Archie was curious, the less had he any intention of showing it. He listened himself to what was said, but he asked no questions. Finally he started, half an hour before they went to meet the newcomers, for a long walk up the hill.

"It is too lovely," said Rosamond, presenting her cheek, as usual, that Mrs. Rowland should kiss it. "I wish some one had told me that it was a beautiful place. I never began to look till we got into the steamboat. I am not in the least tired, thank you. Eddy ! where are you, Eddy ? One never knows where to find him. He is always picking up everywhere some fellow he knows. He is not nice to travel with, because there are so many fellows he knows."

Here there advanced from the other end of the boat, and bounded across the gangway just before it was withdrawn, a short young man, with a travelling cap upon one side of his head and a cigar in his mouth. He had to make a jump upon the pier amid a shout of "Take care, will ye !" and "What are ye doing, lad ?" from the man at the pier ; and dropped like a projectile in the midst of the group which, so undistinguished was Eddy's appearance, were not looking for him except his sister, who put out a hand as if to help him. "That was cleverly done," said Rowland, opposing his own substantial bulk to arrest the stranger who was standing in their midst ; "but I would advise you, my young friend, to bestir yourself sooner, and not run such a risk again."

"Oh, it is his way," replied Rosamond. "You would not think it, but this is Eddy, Mrs. Rowland. He is like nobody one ever saw."

Certainly he was not like his handsome father, the young Edward Saumarez whom Evelyn remembered so well. She had been half afraid of seeing a reproduction of his old look: But that was one of the anticipatory troubles that she might well have spared herself. He was short ; his hair was light and scanty ; his eyes half lost under many folds of loose eyebrows, and a brow which contracted with what some unkind critic has called the short-sighted soul, was rather small. His nose was

turned up a little. Marion, who, in the interests of Archie, had been looking forward, half with hope and half with fear, to the arrival of a beautiful youth—a darling of society, exquisitely clothed and of distinguished appearance—felt a pang, half of disappointment, half of relief. Perhaps the relief was the stronger. Archie!—why Archie was taller, better-looking, and more a man than this little shambling fellow! The foolish father felt much more cordial to Eddy, and grasped him strongly by the hand.

“You’re welcome to Rosmore, both you and your sister,” he said.

There came an answer from Eddy’s lips which sounded very much like “Who’s this?” but a glance from his sister brought him to himself, and he made his bow accordingly.

“I’m very glad to be here, I can tell you,” said Eddy. “Never knew such a beast of a journey—tumbled out of one carriage into another, and then Glasgow, and then a boat, and I don’t know all what. How do you do? Been here long?—and have you got any sport? It’s just like my luck to come so late.”

“My son,” said Rowland with ineffable pleasure—for he did not feel ashamed of his son now, quite the reverse in sight of this shabby young lad, who looked like nothing at all—“has arranged a day for you, and I think you’ll find a bird or two yet.”

“That’s all right,” said Eddy. “How do you do, Mrs. Rowland! It is very pretty, as Rose says, but I’m not a man for the picturesque myself. Oh, you’re going to walk? Excuse me, I’m not much of a walking man: I’ll go with the ladies, if it’s the same to you.”

“Certainly,” said Rowland amazed, but always with a certain exultation on Archie’s account. This an example for Archie! the boy was twice the man this fellow was. It is not good to rejoice in the disadvantages of other people, but he had been so sure, and professed his pleasure in it, that Saumarez’s son—a man in the best society—could be a model for Archie, that the satisfaction in finding him so shabby a little fellow was more than words could say. He did not need to be ashamed of his own boy in this company at least. Mr. Rowland started to walk, while the little man jumped into his place in the carriage, with a certain elation, as if somebody had given him something he acknowledged to himself.

“How jolly of you to come to meet us,” said Eddy, “country fashion. We were wondering, Rose and I, if there would be a dog-cart or something. Never expected this luxury. Rose, did you see after the luggage? I had no time to think of it—met a fellow who was with me at Eton—one of the great plucked, don’t you know—run all over the country in crowds at this time of the year.”

“Yes,” said Rosamond with her calm air, “he was plucked of course, Mrs. Rowland. I told you we could not come any sooner

because of his exam. Of course I knew quite well how it would turn out, and so I told father. But there are some things that people will not believe. I never can see the good, for my part, of going in for exams. that you are sure not to pass."

"Oh," said Eddy, light-heartedly, "it is always something to do—keeps you from feeling that you've got no centre to your life, don't you know. I like a sort of fixed point ; if you don't work up to it, of course that's your fault, but all the same an object,—a fine thing. Don't you agree with me, Miss Rowland ?" said the young man, turning round a little to look into the face of his companion on the front seat, who had given up her place to Rosamond without any pleasure, and was now studying that young lady in every line of her costume, with something of the same sensation of mingled disappointment and relief which her father had experienced. Marion was accustomed now to all the subtleties of the toilette. She was more respectful of Rosamond's grey gown than she had been of Evelyn's travelling dress ; but she perceived at a glance that from this visitor there would be little to learn.

"I don't know what you mean by an object. I think most gentlemen's object is to please themselves," Marion said.

"That's what you call epigrammatic, ain't it," said Eddy, "and severe."

"Oh, I just say what I think," said Marion. She had not had a young man given her to play with since the days of the students, who laughed at her saucy speeches, and said among themselves that Rowland's sister was clever, much cleverer than he was ; and the prospect was agreeable to her. Not that there was anything attractive in Eddy personally, but still he was of the kind of mouse to her cat—or cat to her mouse, as sometimes happens in that sort of exercise. They eyed each other with furtive glances, both aware of this probable relationship.

"Father has left Aix," said Rosamond, "they have sent him to some other place which it is supposed may do him good. Of course so long as he has Rogers with him we know that he is well attended to. I hope we shall not stay too long and bore you, Mrs. Rowland. Would it be too much to say a month ? I hope you will be so kind as to tell us if you want our rooms for other visitors, or get tired of us. Of course people always do in society, or it would be impossible to get on."

"Yes, I promise, my dear, I shall tell you if I get tired of you," said Evelyn.

"We have been for a fortnight with grandmamma. I think we bored her very much. She told us she had people coming for the 22nd. But we really could not get away on the 22nd. One's grandmother is not the same as any one else, do you think ? However much she may be bored, it is right that she should put up with it. We don't go there very much. Once in a year is not a great deal. She never has anything to say to father : he makes her so nervous, she says. She will soon say

that Eddy makes her nervous too : when there is no smoking-room, perhaps it may be a little unpleasant to smell his cigars ; but if there is anything at all in being a grandmother—then she is of course impatient that he has not passed his exam. I cannot see why, for my part. They ought to have known it from the first. If you will not even open a book, how can you expect to pass any exam. ? ”

“ My object, I allow, is to amuse myself,” said Eddy to Marion, dropping his voice, as it is the right thing to do when you wish to set up a separate conversation. “ I am quite candid, as you are—and, tell me, isn’t that yours too ? ”

“ I am afraid you will not find it very easy,” said Marion, “ to amuse yourself at Rosmore.”

“ What ! is there nothing to do ? ” said Eddy, looking a little dismayed.

“ We never see anybody from morning to night but the old maids out of the village. And we never go anywhere. There was a ball at Campbellton, but they refused it, and there was one at Eagle’s Craig, but they just went themselves.”

“ Good heavens ! ” cried Eddy, “ what depravity ! you never mean to say that the old people, papa and mamma——”

“ They just went themselves ! ” said Marion with an indignation almost too terrible for words.

“ This must be looked into,” said Eddy, “ it is almost beyond belief.”

“ I will tell you after,” said Marion, as the conversation on the other side of the carriage came to a pause.

Thus Mr. Edward Saumarez, jun., procured for himself, without a moment’s delay, something to do at Rosmore. And Marion Rowland found at once an additional interest in life. It was quite innocent, and as trivial as could have been desired. In the evening after dinner she confided a part of her troubles to him, and then the next day, when the young visitors were conducted by the young people of the house to see the neighbourhood, Marion managed so that Rosamond went on with Archie, while she herself followed, attended by Eddy. And the sight of the two pairs thus arranged was amusing enough. Rosamond went on in advance, very quickly, with her smooth firm step, and her head held high, as she walked in London, where, intent upon her own business, this young woman of the period passed where she pleased, as safe in her own protection and that, but in a most secondary degree, of her mastiff,—as safely as Una with her lion ; while Archie walked by her, a step behind, finding it slightly difficult to keep up with her long yet graceful steps, and still more difficult to answer the occasional questions which she addressed to him without turning her head. Archie for his own part could not, however he cudgelled his brains, find out anything to say to this beautiful young lady. He felt her to be miles, nay Alps above him, and that he could not say anything which did not feel common, vulgar, mean—like a boy in a shop

talking to a princess. He kept striving to keep up with her, yet never quite kept up with her save when she stopped suddenly and turned with the same swiftness of movement with which she walked to look out on the water or up to the hills, when he would outgo her, and be compelled to swing himself round with an effort to get back to his place.

"What is the name of that hill?" she asked, all at once coming to one of those sudden pauses. "That?" said Archie, anxiously turning to quite another point; "oh, that is Ben Ros—or no, I think it is what they call The Miller—if it is not Rosdhu."

"You don't seem to know very much about them," said the stately girl; and then she set off again, certainly indifferent to the blundering explanation he made that he was afraid he had a bad memory, and that one person said one thing and one another, so that it was difficult to know. At another time it was on the sea-side that Rosamond paused, demanding to know the name of the lighthouse in the distance, and what was the shadowy height to be seen far off down the course of the Clyde. If it had cost him his life, poor Archie could not remember whether he had been told that this peak was Goatfell or if it was one of the Cumbraes, which he knew lay "that way." And the light: what was it that Roderick called the light? If he had ever dreamt that he would be interrogated this way, Archie would have given his whole attention to the acquisition of local knowledge. A cold perspiration came out upon his forehead, as he stammered out answers which he was sure were all wrong. "Oh!" said Miss Saumarez, not even deigning to cast a glance at him. Eddy did not suffer half so much for his unsuccessful examination as poor Archie did from this totally unexpected process, which showed him the profound depth of his ignorance. What a fool she must think him! What an idiot he was!

"I am afraid, Mr. Rowland, you don't admire your own country so much as I do," Rosamond said at the end of the walk, with a smile that went over his head like an arrow, which she did not even take the trouble to aim at him. And he was tongue-tied and could not say a word, could not think of anything to say; though after she had gone on, a dozen little darts of words which he might have said came into his mind, wounding himself with little pricks instead of compelling her to respect him a little, as, if they had but come soon enough, they might have done.

Meanwhile the other pair had got on, as Eddy would have said, like a house on fire. Marion had given him the whole history of the ball at Eagle's Craig, to which she had been invited with her stepmother; but to which Mrs. Rowland had gone alone—with diamonds round her neck and in her hair.

"She would not have had any diamonds but for papa," said Marion. "She was quite nobody when he married her."

"Oh, now I don't think that can be true," said Eddy, "for my governor, you know—" an impulse of wisdom checked the young

man—"couldn't have known her, could he, if she had been nobody?"

"Well, at least she was nobody out in India," said Marion, "and to see her now! And I had to stay at home—me, papa's own daughter, and the only one, and a very good dancer! And it was her that went to the ball, an old lady, and me, I had to stay at home!"

"It is a sort of thing that would justify an appeal to parliament," said Eddy, "but there must have been some sort of reason alleged. Perhaps you had not a frock?"

"I have dozens of frocks," said Marion, turning upon him with a gleam in her eye.

"Or you did not know the people?"

"I know heaps of people; that is, I did not know them myself, but what does it matter about that when I am papa's daughter, and he could just—buy them all up!"

"Oh," said Eddy, taken a little aback—for though he was accustomed to a great deal of slang and much frank speaking, it was not generally quite of this kind. "Then," he said, "I am at my wits' end, and I can't think what they meant."

"They said," cried Marion, "that I was not out."

"Oh," said Eddy again.

"But what did that matter—for who would have ever known? And it was a delightful ball, with a great many officers. And I am a fine dancer," said Marion, with a deep sigh of mingled indignation and regret.

"Oh, as for that, there is no doubt," said Eddy, "you are as light as a feather, and with those pretty little feet—"

"No, I am not as light as a feather: I am just the weight I ought to be, and my feet are just the same as other people's; but I know," said Marion with conviction, "that I am good at dancing. Archie is not very good at it, and he is not fond of it."

"He does not look as if he would be," said Eddy, with a look at the son of the house tramping on before them at a considerable distance in close pursuit of the lady who was in his charge.

"No," said Marion, "he never was fond of it—are you?"

"Oh, I adore it," said the young man, "when I have a partner to my mind. You and I, Miss Marion, would fly like the wind. We'd leave everybody behind us. I'll tell you what we must do to make up for that Ravenseraig—no, Eagle's Craig business—we'll make them give a ball here."

"A ball at Rosmore!"

"The very thing! while we are here. Rosamond has not come out either, but, as you say, who will ever know? We may as well have our fun, and you and she can keep each other in countenance. Nobody will tell—and what would it matter if they did? Why, girls not out are to be seen everywhere—always at balls at home. You put on a high dress."

"No," cried Marion, "I would rather die than go to a dance in a high dress."

"Well, don't then," said the complacent Eddy, "anything you please. Oh, don't be afraid. I will speak to Mrs. Rowland. I can be as independent as you like when there's any occasion for it. And my governor, you know, poor old chap——"

"Do you mean 'your papa'?" said Marion.

"Well, I don't call him so," said Eddy with a laugh. "There was a story, don't you know, about him and your mamma-in-law. The governor behaved badly, but she had a sneaking kindness for him all the same. That's why we are here."

"Oh!" cried Marion, with a gasp of excitement, "tell me! for I know nothing about her. I want to know about her. I was sure there was some story."

"The governor was a sad dog when he was young," said Eddy. "Oh, he's a nice fellow to blow a fellow up for some trifles not half so bad as himself. He was up to anything that was naughty. It's funny, isn't it, to hear of these antediluvian lovers—my old governor, who can't move a limb, poor old chap, and this prim lady here who looks like a saint."

"As if butter wouldn't melt in her mouth," said Marion; "but I always knew there was some story. Be quick and tell me, for they are coming back."

"I will tell you another time. Can't we come out to-night in the moonlight to smoke a cigarette? Did you ever try a cigarette? Oh, all the girls do! I'll teach you how. It makes you much better company when you don't mind a cigarette.—Hi! here's Rosamond down upon us. Not a word to her, whatever I tell you. And your brother coming lagging behind as if she had given him a touch of the lash. She's a rare one for that; keeps a fellow in his place, as if she was too grand to mind."

"Oh, Archie is just as grand as she is," said the girl, slightly offended; "and it is just his way to keep behind. I would like to see anybody giving my brother a touch of the lash!"

"It is not because he is your brother, but because he is himself," said Eddy. "I don't mean any offence. I mean that's Rosamond's way. She is like the governor, don't you know. She has got a great deal of the devil in her. So have you, I should think."

"Me!" said Marion, much shocked. "I am not what you think at all."

"Yes," said Eddy, "I am sure you are what I think. As nice as girls are made, but plenty of devilry, and a spirit for anything. That is precisely what I like best."

"Well," said Marion, "I will allow that I have a great deal of spirit, if that's what you call the——; but you shouldn't say bad words. Do you mean that girls are not made so nice as men? for I think you're very impudent to say so, and me a girl that you are speaking to."

"Girls," said Eddy, with an air of authority, "are sometimes much better, and sometimes they are a great deal worse than men. There's no medium in them. You are one of the nice ones, so of course you are a great deal nicer than a fellow like me, or even your brother. I am a dreadful little beggar, and that is the truth."

"Oh, you like to say ill things of yourself."

"No, I don't, if they weren't true. You hit me off exactly, the very first thing, when you said men had no object but to amuse themselves. You must be awfully clever as well as nice. I don't see what we're in the world for but to enjoy ourselves. I'm sure I didn't ask to come, and I dare say I shan't have a very long life, so I mean it to be a merry one, I can tell you. As for the governor," said Eddy, "he has no right to complain. Rose is too good for him, but he deserves to have me to keep him in mind of how naughty he has been."

"What have you done," said Marion, interested, "that is so—naughty, as you say?"

"Oh, you would like to know?" he said, opening his eyes wide, with a laugh. "Perhaps if I were to tell you, you would never speak to me any more."

"I am not that kind," said Marion. "I would always speak to you, whatever you did—if you were sorry."

"Ah! but the chief thing in me is that I am not a bit sorry," said Eddy.—"Are you going back already, you two? You go off like a hunter, Rose, never minding who toils after you. Miss Rowland and I are going further on."

"There is a beautiful view up there," said Rosamond, pointing to the west, "if you cared about views, and the mountains are beautiful in that direction, but as you never would look at a landscape in your life—"

"Not when I had mettle more attractive," said Eddy, with a look at Marion, and then he laughed out. "When I can combine both, I like it very much."

"Mary, it is perhaps going to rain. I would not advise you to go very far," said Archie, who was more susceptible than his sister to the light compliment and the laughter. But Marion stood her ground.

"Since we came to Rosmore," she said, "it has always been going to rain, and we can shelter under the trees, and it does no harm. I have promised to Mr. Saumarez to show him Ben Ros before we go in."

"I am very anxious to make the acquaintance of Ben Ros," said Eddy with a laugh. "*Au revoir*, you people who have accomplished that part already. I don't suppose you are deeply attached to Ben Ros—what do you call him—are you? But it is always a good excuse for a walk—and a talk."

"You never call me by my name," said Marion; "you say just *you*, as if I were not a person at all."

"Because you would be angry if I called you by your name."

"Me, angry! Why I am just Miss Rowland to everybody, servants and all."

"I suppose you don't rank me with the servants? I shall say Marion or nothing—and of course you would not allow me—or May, that is your name too, and the prettiest of all."

"May is short for Marion," she said with a blush.

"And I'm to call you so? Then I shall do nothing but call you by it. May, May—it is the prettiest name in the world."

Thus there came into conjunction another two who were not Mr. Rowland's two, nor perhaps a two who were very desirable companions for each other, yet who suited each other, as Mr. Edward Saumarez eloquently expressed it, down to the ground.

## CHAPTER XXIV

"A BALL! It is not Archie, I am sure, who would like a ball," said Mrs. Rowland from the sofa, where Eddy had been sitting by her, in an attitude of respectful adoration for some time. He had cast repeated startling glances at Marion, calling her observation while he was so engaged. And Marion, seated at a distance with a book held up in front of her face, gave way now and then to little bursts of laughter, which she quickly repressed. It was infinitely ludicrous to Marion that any one should pretend to advise Mrs. Rowland, a woman of that age; but Eddy, she thought, played his part to perfection, and it was the funniest thing in the world.

Rosamond was seated at the piano, playing as it were in an undertone, and for her own pleasure, various bits of music, one suggesting another, as one verse of poetry suggests another. She was a good musician, but she did not attempt to play to so indifferent an audience, though Rowland was always certainly civil in his desire to "have a little music," when he came into the drawing-room after dinner. The good man knew that this was the right thing, and that Miss Saumarez would expect to be asked, and sat and yawned dutifully through what he privately thought to himself "just a terrible jingle," out of respect to his guest. But Rowland had not left the dining-room on this occasion. He had a playfellow of his own who had dined with him, and was now engaging him in much more congenial talk. Archie was not much more educated in music than his father; but there was in his unpossessed being a power of perception, only half developed, of beautiful things. A sonata would have disconcerted him as much as it did Rowland; but the bits of melody that Rosamond was playing, and which he called in his simplicity tunes, seemed to make an atmosphere about her which was poetically appropriate, and filled the background of the large partially-lighted sitting-room.

The group on the sofa, with Marion's detached figure full in the light of a lamp, seemed like a group on the stage, carrying on the thread of some half-comprehended story. Rosamond and the music belonged to a different sphere. There were shaded candles upon the piano, throwing a white light upon a pair of white hands, moving softly over the ivory keys; behind, the curtains were drawn back from one of the rounded windows, a line of moonlight came in, and in the distance from the corner in which Archie was seated unseen there was a glimmer visible of the distant waters of the Clyde, in glistening life and movement under the white blaze of the moon. Archie's heart was full of strange and uncomprehended emotion. He was in a new world, listening to those soft strains which touched him as the light might touch a being coming to life, and feeling the vague enchantment of the night, the presence, like a charm, of the half-seen figure, half dark, half light, at the piano, and this subtle atmosphere in which she breathed. He had said very little to Rosamond in the week during which they had lived under the same roof. She despised him quite frankly, taking no pains to disguise it. He read in her looks that she thought him a lout, a fool, a nuisance, and he was not angry or even surprised that she should think so. But he had no such thoughts of her. He liked to watch her, as he liked to look (but this he had never betrayed to any one) at the hills. He liked this atmosphere of the music, which seemed to have a curious appropriateness to her—not that he appreciated the music, although she was playing, he thought, some very pretty tunes, but it suited her somehow. He had not read much poetry, and could not remember any that would apply to her, as a better instructed man might have done; but the whole scene had a vague poetry which filled in a dim sort of way Archie's inarticulate soul. He listened sitting in what was almost the dark, listening and listening, though he did not suppose she even knew he was there.

But the sound of one's own name penetrates distance and music and even the development of thought in the strangest way. He heard Mrs. Rowland say that Archie, she could see, would not desire a ball, and the impulse of opposition sprang up quick and strong within him.

"Why should I not like a ball as well as the rest?" he said out of his corner, raising his voice that his opinion might be heard.

"There! I told you so," said Eddy; "who wouldn't wish for a ball in this house? The floor in the hall is perfect—it is wasting a good thing not to dance upon it. I am sure you of all people, dear lady, are not one to waste good things. Then fancy what a thing for us. We should make acquaintance with everybody, and probably reap a harvest of invitations. We are on the prowl. We want to be asked places. The governor would feel how nobly you had done your part by us——and——and——"

That shower of fluent words flowed on, but Archie's attention to it suddenly failed. For out of the dimness nearer to him, through the sound of the softly tinkling notes, came a soft but very distinct question—"Why should you, Mr. Rowland, wish for a ball?"

"I don't," he cried abruptly in his surprise.

"Then you gave a false impression. Mrs. Rowland must think from what you said that you gave the project your support." She spoke without turning her head, playing softly all the while, speaking in her usual calm and serious vein.

"I would not oppose," said Archie, "what Marion wanted, and you."

"You are quite right to put Marion first. It is not generally accounted civil, but it was honest, and I like it from you. I do not care—I am not fond of dancing. There are so many things more important in this life. I should have been surprised if you had wished it," she added after an interval, during which she had gone on modulating, with her hands pressed down upon the keys.

"Would you tell me why?" said Archie timidly out of the dim world behind her.

"Oh," she said, "not because it is the fashion with a certain sort of young man, for I don't suppose you would—" she meant to say "know," in her disdain, but moved by some better feeling, said instead "care. But I should not think you were fond of dancing," she said, pressing firmly upon the two bass keys.

"You think," said Archie, emboldened by the fact that she could not see him, "that I don't look much like dancing. And it's true. I am not good at it. Marion is, though," he said, after a little pause.

"And what has that got to do with you?"

"Oh!" he said surprised. Then after a pause, "I would naturally like her to be pleased."

"You would naturally—like her to be pleased?" Rosamond ceased her playing and turned right round upon the music-stool, facing him. But the light of the candles was now entirely behind her, shining upon the ribbons of her sash—shining a line of colour beyond her white figure, but leaving her countenance invisible as before. "Why?" she said after an interval, "why?"

"Why?"

"Yes, yes, why? Don't I speak plain? Why? I want to know why."

"But there is no why to it," said Archie, "it is just so."

She sat dark against the light and thought over this proposition for some time. "Well," she said at length, "but you are inconsistent. You go against your father in everything, and this lady—who is so out of place here—"

"Why," said Archie hotly, "is she so much out of place here?"

"Oh!" said Rosamond, and turning round again she burst into a loud heroic tuneful strain, filling the still room with a clamour of sound. In a few minutes more she had changed into a waltz. Then there occurred a complete transformation scene. Eddy jumped up from his seat by Mrs. Rowland, and snatched or seemed to snatch Marion from her chair, and the pair began to fly and flout about the room, as lightly as a pair of birds. Eddy Saumarez was not an elegant cavalier, but he danced very well, and Marion had not done herself more than justice when she said that she was "very good at it." They threaded the intricacies of the furniture with the greatest lightness and ease, and whirled from dark to light and from light to dark, from where Mrs. Rowland sat looking on with a smile in the full revelation of a large lamp, to where Archie sat unseen in his corner. Rosamond never turned her head, but played on, varying the tune with an *esprit*, which her brother followed, ducking and anon sweeping on the light figure of the girl with all the art of an accomplished performer. Archie, taken completely by surprise at first, watched them with a vague sensation of pleasure in the same, which was against all his prepossessions. The sudden indignation in his mind died out. The novelty and suddenness of the movement beguiled him out of himself. There appeared suddenly at the open door while the dancers still went on, all preliminary sound being drowned by the music, the jovial and ruddy countenances of Rowland and his friend, who stood looking on with broad smiles. "Well done," cried the master of the house, clapping his hands; and then, as if this had been the signal, Rosamond concluded in a moment with a resounding chord, and the dancers stopped short.

"Well, that was a pretty sight—are we to have no more of it?" Rowland said.

"I think I can manage an old-world waltz," said Evelyn, "for Rosamond no doubt would like a turn too."

"No, thanks—Eddy will never dance with me—and I like the piano best."

"Nonsense, nonsense," said the master of the house. "Where's Archie? Get up, ye lout! can ye see a pretty girl wanting a dance and not be on your feet in a moment? Come, Evelyn, let us have the old-world waltz, and see the young ones enjoy themselves."

"Come on," said Eddy to his partner. "It will be as slow as a funeral, but it's fine all the same. Come on, and never mind."

Rosamond stood up by the piano with a perfectly serious face. She turned half round towards Archie's corner, who in an agony of incapacity and reluctance hesitated to make a step towards her. Rosamond did not care any more for the young man than if he had been a cabbage. He had no mystery or attraction for her, as she had for him, nor was her *amour propre* affected by his hesitation. She said, scarcely looking at him from the pitch to which her head thrown high seemed to reach,

above every one, "Are we to dance?" in those clear tones of unaffected indifference and disdain. She knew that she would be bumped against all the furniture, and expected to be thrown upon the rock of Mr. Rowland standing in the middle of the room where Eddy and Marion encircled, brushed with their wings, wound into the gyrations of their indefatigable whirl; but she was resigned, and ready for the sacrifice. To poor Archie it was a far more serious affair. He came slowly forward, slouching his shoulders and bending his head. "You were right in thinking I was not fit for it," he said; "if it's disagreeable to you, you will remember it's not my fault." She put out her hand without a word and placed it on his shoulder. I have read many rhapsodies about the manly character of a waltz, in which two people on the verge of love find themselves suddenly swept together into paradise; but the unhappy young man who cannot dance, who finds a fair partner suddenly, in spite of himself, thrust into his awkward arms, who does not know what to do with her, nor with his own unlucky fate, and the things which seem suddenly to spring up and put themselves into his way—no one, so far as I know, has ever found any interest in the sufferings of such an unlucky hero. He held himself as far apart from her as possible as he turned her slowly round, wondering if she hated him, if she would ever again look at him, afraid to glance at her lest he should read disgust in her face. A time of giddy anguish followed, how long or how short Archie could not tell. He supposed that Rosamond exerted herself to keep him up, to guide him blindly about the room; for when those horrible gyrations were over, and the whirl ceased, and the walls began once more to settle straight into their places, he heard himself addressed with noisy congratulations. "Well done, Archie, you're not such a duffer after all," cried his father. "Bravo, Rowland!" said Eddy. Mrs. Rowland laughed and clapped her hands. "You are far better at it than I thought," said Marion. Rosamond alone stood as serious as before, her breathing a little quickened, looking at it as if she thought she might have soiled the hand which had been upon his shoulder. He felt as if he could have struck her as he turned away his head.

"After this," said Mrs. Rowland, "I must tell you what the children want, Janies. I am opposing it as in duty bound, but their little performance, I am sure, has thrown you on their side: they want us to give a ball."

"A ball!" said Mr. Rowland, with many notes of interrogation; and then he added with the broad smile, which in its warmth and ruddiness breathed a little intimation of being after dinner, "Why not?"

"Ah, I knew you would be on their side. I have been resisting as in duty bound—"

"And why in duty bound? In your heart," said Rowland, "it is you who are always on their side. I may have my little

moments of fatherly wrath. A father is nothing, you know, Legden, if he does not find fault."

"That's quite so," said the great ironmaster, who had been dining with the great railway man. "We must keep up our authority, and discipline must always be preserved."

"But she stands up for them through thick and thin," said the happy man. "I cannot wallop my own niggers, so to speak, meaning to give my boy a wiggling, but she pushes in, standing up for two. To hear her speak, you would think my two were angels, and I an old curmudgeon always finding fault: that's the beauty of a wife."

"Well," said Evelyn, "never mind; I am to give in, I suppose. You know, James, it will turn the whole house upside down."

"We'll put it right again," he said.

"And probably make a revolution among the servants."

"We'll crush the revolution, or get other servants in their places."

"And you will have no comfort in your life for at least three days—the day before the performance, the day of the performance, and the day after the performance."

"Hoot!" said Rowland, and he said no more.

"It will not be a bad plan at all if ye think anything of my opinion," said the ironmaster. "I'm but new in my place myself, a matter of two or three years. And one of the first things I did was to give a ball. It was a very popular thing—we just got in everybody. The young folk, who are very important, who just give you a great lift in reconciling a place where they are pleased, and the mothers that come with them, and all the intermediate ones that are neither young nor old, that are hanging at a loose thread. If your house is a good size, you can ask anybody; and this is a very fair size," said the other rich man, looking condescendingly round the drawing-room, which was certainly not so immense as his great new-built castle down the Clyde.

"Oh, it's big enough," said Rowland, a little wounded in his feelings. To compare Rosmore to any bran-new house with fictitious battlements and towers, was at once a brutality and a bad joke. "We will get in a good number here," he said, looking round him complacently, "and as we have nothing but Eastern carpets, there will be the less trouble. Well, my dear, that is settled. I am not such a stern parent as I get the credit of being, and the bairns shall have their will."

"I told you I could make her do it," said Eddy to Marion behind the shelter of the book of pictures which she had taken up again.

"It was neither you nor her that did it," said Marion: "it was papa."

"It was because she put it to him so cleverly. You will see Mrs. Rowland will always follow my lead. She can't forget that I am my father's son."

"Will you tell me that story?" said Marion, whose curiosity he had raised and allowed to drop a dozen times.

"Some time or other," said Eddy. "I like to keep you on the tenter-hooks. You look prettier than ever when you have a fit of curiosity which makes your eyes shine. Do you know your eyes give out sparks when you look at me like that?"

"Like a cat," said Marion; "that is no compliment."

"Yes, just like a cat, torturing the poor little mouse that she has fascinated with her big shining eyes." He opened his own eyes wide with a threatening movement of his hand, at which they both laughed. "Before she devours him, she tortures him," he said. Which was it? he or she? But poor little Marion had not the faintest idea that she was in the way of being devoured. She did not require very fine methods, but accepted the compliments and the badinage in her simplicity. It amused her extremely to "tease" him, as she thought, to make little rude speeches and show her innocent power. After all it was innocent enough, and artless, if without much delicacy or dignity. So much meaning as was in it was all on Eddy's side.

There was no question of cat or mouse between the other two, who stood by each other's side without movement, without looking at each other, while the question of the ball was discussed. Rosamond at last said to her partner, speaking as usual from her full height, and without even turning her head his way: "You do not dance so very badly, if you would take time and not be flurried." It was the same advice which Evelyn had given him about his shooting, and which he had resented then, as he resented this counsel now.

"You are very kind to encourage me. I have no desire to learn," he said.

"Oh, that's silly," said Rosamond. "Why shouldn't you learn? Why shouldn't you make yourself a little agreeable, Mr. Rowland? No, of course it is nothing to me. I see you for a few weeks, a great deal of you, and then perhaps I never see you again. It does not matter to me in the very least. Still it is a pity to see a man sitting as you do—not speaking, not taking an interest in anything. What is the good of being a man at all?"

Archie was very much taken aback by this onslaught. He stared at her for a moment helplessly. His wit was not quick enough to make any lively rejoinder as he might have done. All he could say was rather vulgar, and said with an injured, offended air—"I did not make myself."

"You ought to make yourself," said the severe young judge, "if you are not made properly to begin with; but that is not the question. Don't you know it makes everybody uncomfortable to see the son of the house sitting behind never saying anything. I hate to be made uncomfortable," said Rosamond, "it makes me think all sorts of horrid things. But there is nothing the matter with you. You are not deformed or bad in

your head, or out of health, or badly snubbed. Mrs. Rowland keeps looking at you : she does not know what to do ; and you make *me* horribly uncomfortable," said Rosamond with energy ; "that was why I made you get up and dance."

"It wasn't very successful," said Archie, with a grim smile ; "don't you wish you had let it alone ?"

"No, I don't wish I had let it alone. I should like to take you by the shoulders and shake you. Oh, if I were your sister!" She broke off with a suggestive grind of her white teeth. "Eddy is bad enough," she added after a moment. "He's a little ape : I can do nothing with him ; but I could put up with even Eddy better than I could put up with you—if I were your sister."

"But fortunately you are not my sister."

"No, nor your stepmother either," said Rosamond with energy, "or I don't know what I should do. Can't you talk a little, can't you try to dance a bit, can't you be like other people ? Usually I don't advise other people so very much : they chatter for ever and ever, and talk a great deal of nonsense. But it reconciles one to them. When one sees you—"

"Perhaps I had better take myself off," said Archie ; "and then you will not have that annoyance any more."

"You want to try to make me out to be a meddler and a busy-body," said Rosamond ; "but I am not that. I only say what I feel. Why, *you* should be the one to make the house pleasant ! You are going out to shoot to-morrow, you and Eddy, and we are to bring you your luncheon out on the hill. You ought to be all full of *petits soucis*, and make it pleasant for us ; but you will not. I know what you will do. You will sit down on a stone as far away as you can go, and you will bend down your brow, and perhaps turn your back, and never say one word."

"I shall do nothing of the kind," said Archie, red with rage, especially as she shrugged up her shoulders, and put down her chin, and contracted her forehead in a manner which he felt to be more or less like himself.

"Yes, you will," said Rosamond, with the point-blank contradiction of youth.

"No, I will not," cried the boy, forgetting everything but his wrongs. A hot moisture came to his eyes. "I hate shooting," he said ; "I hate company. I hate all those antics I was not brought up to. What business have you to come here and want London manners from me ?"

"You poor boy," said Rosamond, shaking her highly-poised head. "London manners," she said, in a tone of the mildest philosophy, "are often just what yours are. Men in London ape being rude like you. They pretend to care for nothing ; not to hear what people say to them. It is smart to be uncivil, don't you know. If you keep it up, you will be the fashion when you go to town."

Archie clenched his fist in the height of his passion ; not, of

course, to hit out at Rosamond, but at somebody—at the London men—at the detestable world.

"Oh, you may be angry," said the young lady, "but it is quite true. Should you like to dance with me again, Mr. Rowland, for you see Eddy and Marion are off once more? and Mrs. Rowland plays very well—really very nicely, for such an old-fashioned thing as she is playing. If you do not choose to dance, as there is nobody else to take me out, perhaps you will kindly say so, and then we need not continue standing here."

Said Archie, with a gasp, with sudden humility, "I can't dance at all; do you want to make a fool of me! If you think it is my fault, you are quite mistaken. I don't want to be ridiculous. I would talk and do things if I could—"

"Come along then and try," said the girl. "Don't be flurried and nervous. Let us make for the other end of the room, where there is not much light—and do remember not to knock against your father. That was not bad at all; now, one turn more, and then make for the window, and take me out."

"You will catch cold," said Archie, breathlessly.

"Oh, I'm not afraid; and it will make an end of it. Here we are," she cried, as they emerged suddenly into the moonlight. "Now give me your arm, please, and take me round to the back door. Eddy will be after us in a moment; it will be just the chance for him. That was all very well for ten minutes, but it would not do to carry it on all night. Oh!" she said, suddenly, "look! look!"

They had come out suddenly upon the colonnade, and in a moment stood in another world. Far below the Clyde lay like molten silver, in a ripple of glistening movement, with the mass of trees, wholly denuded of their leaves, paving it in on either side. Into the opening glided in a moment a little pleasure boat, with a white sail catching the white blaze of the moon. It was wafted by in a moment, as they stood, appearing and disappearing like a bird across the silver tide. The sky, a wide, vast vault of blue, flaked with little white clouds, seemed to envelop and hold that little vignette of earth and sky. In the far distance was the darkness of heaven's vault, the smoke of the town on the other side, with a few lights appearing out of it here and there. Rosamond, forgetting herself in the sudden sensation, pressed his arm with her fingers to call his attention. "Did you ever see it like that before?" she said.

"Never!" said Archie, with a fervour of which he was not himself conscious, feeling as if all the evil conditions of life had vanished and paradise come.

Was this another version of the cat and the mouse?

## CHAPTER XXV

THE luncheon on the hill-side would have been probably as successful as these parties ever are, had it not been for one incident. In the train of the little pony-cart, which carried the food, and which had to be led over the rougher parts by Sandy the groom, there appeared a stranger whom Mrs. Rowland and her visitors had seen at two or three corners on the way, so long as it was possible to drive: supposed a tourist—which was a being very little esteemed at Rosinore, where tourists were divided into two sections, one labelled as being “from Glasgow,” who was at once the most innocent and the most objectionable; while the other, in the slang of the district, was called B.T. or British tourist, and was presumably “from the south,” a flattering appellation which means England in these regions. This man had been persistently making his way with much toil, but apparent inoffensiveness, to the top of the hill, and the ladies had not interfered with his freedom. I may say, however (which is a view not perhaps popularly taken), that there are two ways of regarding the indiscriminate presence of tourists everywhere as exemplified in the question of footpaths. The tourist ought to know that wherever he appears he is objectionable to the natives of a country, save to those who sell him provisions, and take him in to lodge; and that his undesired presence upon private property is regarded by all who possess any, whether it be a grass-plot or a hill-side, with unmitigated aversion. It is at least as hard for the proprietor to put up with him, as it is for him to be shut out from one particular view—which is no better than other views which are to be procured on other people’s property, or even from the high-road. If it were then fully understood that there was a hardship on both sides, it might be easier to come to an understanding. Mrs. Rowland and the young ladies regarded the figure of the tourist toiling upwards with natural hostility. “What right has any man on our hill!” Marion said; and there was one occasion on which Rosamond had actually extended a foot, with the intention of jumping out of the pony carriage and warning off the intruder.

“I do not mind in the least telling him that he is on private property, if you wish it, Mrs. Rowland.”

“My dear, though it is private property, it is only the wild side of a mountain,” said Evelyn; “the poor man is doing harm to nothing but our feelings.”

“If he was to be shot,” said the persistent Marion, “we would be blamed for not warning him.”

Perhaps Mrs. Rowland thought it would not be a bad thing if the stranger was shot (very slightly), as the best way of proving the peril of such unauthorized wanderings. But she said nothing,

and drove on, until the path was lost in the moor, and the ladies had to get out and walk.

It was too much of a good thing, however, they all felt, when the same man was seen to reappear, following closely in the footsteps of Sandy, who led the pony with the luncheon. They had reached by this time the appointed spot on the hill, which was high above the loch, a sort of natural platform, where a circle of grass broke the darker surface of the heather and underwood. Great bushes of high-growing ling, with the faded bells all stiffened into russet upon them, stood round this oasis, which was kept green, and in a wet season something more than green, by the burn, which made half a circuit round it, leaping downwards from little ridge to ridge of its course. All around among the heather grew the sweet gale, or bog-myrtle, sending up a grateful sweetness when any one crushed a self-sacrificing plant. The sky was of the triumphant yet not too well assured brightness, which is peculiar to Highland skies—a sort of heavenly triumph over difficulties, chastened by the sense that the conquered clouds may blow back at any moment. Deep down, the loch lay like a blue mirror, with all the little clouds floating upon it like boats, in reflections, among the grey willows and the yellow autumnal foliage. Was the grass so velvet, mossy, and beautiful of this little circle—slightly wet, perhaps boggy, “saft,” as Sandy said? Far from us be the thought: besides, it was heaped with shawls and plaids, and what did it matter? The only members of the party who thought of the view were Evelyn and Rosamond. The others were satiated with views. And what did Eddy and Marion care for anything but their eternal war of words, their little mutual rudenesses and compliments? About Archie’s sentiments nobody knew. Sometimes he turned his back to the loch, sometimes would be seen with his eyes intent, as if he were watching something on the opposite side.

“Oh!” said Marion suddenly, with a long-drawn breath, “there is that man again!”

“What man?”

They had all been seated on the dry ridge of the ling, rustling and stiff with its dessicated flowers, above the less trustworthy level of the grass, and were watching with interest the broken hobble of the cart with the baskets, over the uneven ground.

“Roderick will tell him—” said Mrs. Rowland, “and persuade him to go away.”

“Ay will I, mem,” said the gamekeeper, jocund but grim. “I’ll persuade him—in the drawing of a breath.”

Here an exclamation from Eddy startled everybody. “Oh, hold on!” was all the young man said; but his tone had an expression which somehow roused the attention of every one. He made a spring among the heather towards the objectionable visitor. “Is it you, Johnson? I thought you were gone,” he

was heard to say. And then it appeared that he had something private to add to the intruder, for he drew him away under the shelter of the clump of rowan trees, which lent an illumination of red berries to the scene.

The luncheon had been spread out, and everything was ready to begin upon, when Eddy, certainly under the circumstances the most useful member of the party, came back. He was slowly followed by the tourist, and bore a somewhat embarrassed look. "Mrs. Rowland, may I introduce a friend of mine, Johnson of—St. Chad's?" His countenance had been full of perplexity, but in the momentary pause which preceded the utterance of the last words, he suddenly recovered himself. "Distinguished don," he added, "no end of a scholar. Came up here for a reading party; but some of them have not arrived yet."

Mr. Johnson did not come up to Evelyn's ideas of a distinguished don; but Mrs. Rowland was aware that appearances are often deceptive in the case of such great personages, and it did not occur to her that October was an unlikely moment for a reading party. She was perhaps the only one who attached any significance at all to the words. She begged Mr. Johnson to find a seat for himself, and share their luncheon. He was an insignificant person, with furtive eyes and a sallow complexion, clothed in the usual tweeds. "I am sure, madam, I am much obliged to you," he said; which was somewhat startling; but dons are often very old-fashioned, as Evelyn was aware.

The conversation went on as if he were not there. He was a taciturn person, but gave a great and concentrated attention to the basket. To see him eating and drinking recalled to Evelyn stories which everybody in her youth had been fond of telling to the disadvantage of the dous.

"You have very little in your bag. I would have killed more myself," said Marion.

"Ah, I dare say," Eddy replied; "you've no heart and no conscience, and what would you care what you killed? A man or two in the bag would have made it much heavier."

"As if I would take the trouble to shoot men!"

"And a woman can't be tried for manslaughter," said Eddy: and they both laughed as if, except their own rather poor fun, there was nothing that was of any interest in the world.

Rosanond kept her stately pose, her lofty manner of treating the subject under discussion, but she was perhaps scarcely more elevated in her aim. "Can you tell me the names of the mountains, now?" she said, with an emphasis which only Archie understood.

And he woke up from that self-absorbed dullness which was the aspect he presented in general, and pointed out to her peak after peak, not without an occasional glance at Roderick in the background, who gave him a nod back again over the young lady's head. Evelyn looked on, perceiving all these little details

with an unembarrassed attention. It was seldom she was so free to observe what was going on about her : the business of a large household, to which she was yet unaccustomed, the calls of her husband upon her attention, the cares of the mistress of the house to keep everything going, had lessened her possibilities of observation. But the position of an elder woman in the midst of a little company of this description is sometimes almost uncomfortably free. There is no pretence made of any particular regard to her amusement, and she is allowed to observe at her leisure. Evelyn perceived, with a little alarm, the position of affairs. Was it perhaps accidental—a mere fortuitous conjunction of the two who most attracted each other? Was it perhaps a plan, a scheme? She had been so long out of the world of social scheming that she had forgotten its ways. She observed for a little with a half benign amusement the skirmishing of Marion and Eddy, the little onslaughts and withdrawals, provocations not much more refined than a milkmaid's jibes, responses not in better taste. Mrs. Rowland had not thought much of the "style" of Edward Saumarez the younger, from the beginning—an old-fashioned word, which in the language of the present day would mean that she thought him "bad form." Words change, and so do all forms of expression, but the actual fact does not alter. As she mentally compared this commonplace young man, whose manners she thought bad and whose person was so entirely without distinction, with his father—the love of her own youth, the handsome, distinguished, courtly Saumarez of another day—a sudden rush of painful feeling came over Evelyn. Was this what he intended? Was it to be so done that she herself should seem the schemer, the matchmaker, promoting the advantage of his son and daughter above that of her husband's children? Nobody remarked how Evelyn was looking, or inquired what it was that gave occasion for that sudden flush and paleness. Was this what it meant—his eagerness to connect his children with her, that she should invite them, assume the responsibility of them? Evelyn saw everything that might have been in his mind as with the flash of a sudden light. He had jilted her, but she had never ceased to care for him, people would say; as witness the results. Had she not thrown her husband's boy and girl, inexperienced, suspecting nothing, made of money, into the grip of those clever Saumarez?

Evelyn got up from her seat in the horror of the thought that thus came into her mind, and with the sensation that she must do something at once to put an end to it. But nobody even remarked her movement, and she sat down again with a pant of baffled eagerness. Rosamond and Archie sat with their backs to her, full of their own subject: the dull boy was awakening under that siren's touch; while Marion and Eddy kept up a deafening chatter about something much more interesting than the mountains or waters—themselves; each moving on the lines

that answered best. Was the plan laid out in all its details? Had they come with their instructions to captivate these two homely Rowlands before the other harpies had so much as got note of them, to anticipate all competition? It was just such a heartless scheme as he might have conceived in his unsoftened, unchastened suffering. And Madeline Leighton's words came back upon Evelyn's mind with a sudden horror : "He will compromise you, if he can, with your husband." How angry she had been, thinking only of the ordinary sense of these words. Ah! here was another sense—a sense she had never dreamt of! If Eddy Saumarez with his bad little record, his short story of as much folly as could be crammed into a life of twenty, asked Marion's father for her hand and fortune—and Archie, with the power of sullen opposition which was in him, proclaimed his intention of marrying Rosamond, to whom would her husband turn as the cause of these premature engagements? Who would be blamed by the world? Would any one believe that she had not thought of such a contingency? Would James—James, whose soul trusted in her? Oh, villain and traitor! was this his way of punishing her for having escaped from his influence, for the late happiness that had made her so much better off than he was? Madeline's warning had not been strong enough or clear enough to save her. Evelyn clasped her hands in her lap till the pressure hurt her, and looked on helpless at the work which was going so briskly on at her side—the work which she would be believed to have planned—with eyes which could scarcely endure the sight.

"I have always observed," Rosamond was saying with the air of a sage, "that the more you take an interest in anything, the more amused you are. Everything is tiresome when you don't take an interest. My father is an instance. He is never out of his chair: he can't do anything without Rogers, not even raise himself up. You would think he had a dreadful life: but he has not: he watches the people, and knows everything that happens. I am a little like that myself. Now Eddy has no such interest in anything. He likes horses and billiards and that sort of thing, and bad company generally." Rosamond gave a glance behind at Eddy's acquaintance, who was making a perfectly good luncheon, and keeping up a furtive observation of everybody round him. "I don't like," she said, "the looks of that man. Do you think he belongs to any college? I don't."

"He is not like the college men I have seen," Archie ventured to say.

"No, of course he is not: he is more like a scout out on a holiday.—As you are so kind as to pay some attention to what I say, Mr. Rowland, please remember that Eddy is not at all to be relied upon. He would think it was quite a good joke to bring in a man like that. Don't let him, whatever you do, have an invitation to the ball."

"If your brother asks for it—" said Archie.

"Never mind my brother : you will do a great deal better if you trust me," said Rosamond. There was a little pause, and then a murmur from Archie, which Evelyn could not hear ; but she drew her own conclusions. It was : "And am I not doing that with all my heart !"

"Oh !" Rosamond said, elevating her eyebrows slightly, casting for almost the first time a glance down upon him. It seemed to give her some surprise, not unmingled with apprehension, and she drew a little further off from the heather, and caught a branch of the gale, as if disturbed for once in her composure. The scent of it, as the girl crushed it in her hand, rose to Mrs. Rowland and remained in her consciousness ever after as something associated with anxiety and care.

Meanwhile Marion and Eddy were chatting so continuously, sometimes in confidential whispers, sometimes with outbursts of sound and laughter, that no one could be any the wiser as to what they said. "He is no more a don than I am," Eddy was confessing ; "it was the first thing I could think of to give him a countenance. There never was a more villainous one than he has by nature. No, I won't tell you what he is : he's mixed up with all sorts of people. What a lark to have him asked to the ball ! Do you think she would do it ? To introduce him everywhere as Johnson of Chad's, and see how he would behave ! I shall not let you dance with him though, or any nice girl I know."

"Oh, I would dance with him if he asked me," said Marion. "If you think that I would be guided by you !"

"I know more about that than you do," said Eddy. "You shan't, I can tell you : for one thing, I mean to dance with you myself all the night. We go so well together, you and I. And I know how to square the chaperons—especially with *her*. She won't dare to say anything against me."

"If you think that I would let her interfere !" said Marion ; "but you are not to get things all your own way. I'll just dance with whom I please—and maybe not with you at all."

"We'll see about that," said Eddy.

"Yes, we'll see about it," cried the girl, and then there was a great laugh, as if this had been the wittiest observation in the world.

If Evelyn did not hear this, she saw it, with all the advantages of spectatorship seeing more in the game than the actors themselves were aware of, probably more (which is the drawback of spectatorship) than had any existence. Would James think she was in the plot ? Would he believe it was of her invention, or that she had carried it out consciously for the advantage of the others ? In her first hurried discovery of this aspect of affairs, it did not occur to Evelyn that James was a man of an old-fashioned type, who believed in true love, and might sympathize with his children if they were impressed by such an influence, more than with any wise counsel or hesitation as to

means. She herself, whatever her sentiments might be, belonged to a world more moved by conventional laws. She thought that she saw him with reproach in his face, looking at her as he never had done, severely, reproachfully—he to whom she owed so much, not only wealth and consideration, but tenderness and kindness, and absolute trust—Trust ! that was the greatest of all : and he would think that she had betrayed him.

Mr. Johnson, so-called of St. Chad's, finished the substantial part of his banquet about this moment, and with a glance at the pastry which was visible, laid out upon the white cloth, stirred a little in his nest of heather, making the long spikes of the ling rustle, and calling forth again that pungent sweetness of the gale. Mrs. Rowland, to whom incivility was impossible, and who, though doubtful, still felt it more comprehensible that a distinguished don might be of evil appearance than that Eddy Saumarez could have told her a lie, turned towards him to see what were his wants. He was not without an ambition to shine in polite conversation, and Evelyn's was not the aspect to discourage such attempts. He said, waving his hand as if to include the whole party, "This is a very cheerful way, if you will let me say so, of meeting for the first time."

"Yes?" said Evelyn, interrogatively.

"It's a beautiful scene," said the stranger, "and the pie was excellent. What a nice way for ladies to join in sport, when the men's tired and ready to be tumbled over at the first shot—ha, ha,—as seems to be the case, ma'am, in your vicinity."

"Sir?" said Mrs. Rowland.

"I don't want to give offence," said Johnson of St. Chad's, "but I should say, if ever there was one, that there is a case." He indicated with his eyebrows the chatting pair, too busy to pay attention to their neighbours, on Mrs. Rowland's other side.

"A case? I do not really know what you mean?" she said hurriedly.

"Oh, I beg your pardon," said the man, "if I remark what I oughtn't. These sort of things are generally remarked—but some people takes them very serious," he added, nodding his head confidentially.

"Takes them serious!" If this was a college don, he had certainly a very strange way of speaking.

"I think you are mistaken," said Mrs. Rowland; "I don't know of anything that is going on—except luncheon. May I offer you some of these, as your friend is too busy to see that you have what you want."

"Ah, he is a fellow that knows what *he* wants," said the don admiringly, "and doesn't trouble himself what other people thinks. Thank you very much, I'll take some grateful—" he added "ly," after he had drawn a breath, making a little choke over the word—"gratefully, that's what I mean. A man gets out of his manners never seeing a lady for—a whole term sometimes," he said.

Was he a college don? More and more puzzled was poor Evelyn, who could believe in anything rather than that she had been told what was not true. But whatever it was, she felt that it was better not to leave this person to his false ideas in respect to the young people. "Perhaps I ought to tell you," she said, "that you are making a mistake. There is no ease, if that means an—engagement, or anything of that sort. My son and daughter are very young, and so are their friends. They are boys and girls together—no one, on either side, would hear of anything of the kind."

"Oh!" said the man, who was certainly not a gentleman, whatever else he might be. He put down his plate and gave a keen look across Mrs. Rowland to Eddy, who was far too much engaged to notice anything. "Oh!" he said again; then after a pause: "I'm an old hand," he added; "it may be you that are mistaken, ma'am, and not me."

Mrs. Rowland did not think proper to say more. One way or other it must, she thought, be a matter of entire indifference to this disreputable-looking stranger what were the circumstances of Eddy Saumarez. She rose from her throne of heather, taking no further notice of the visitor, and disturbing the party altogether, to the resentment of everybody. "I have only just begun to have my lunch," said Marion--and "Is it really time to be going?" Rosamond asked with a fine tone of surprise. The young men said little; but their faces showed their feelings. "That is the worst of it," said Eddy, in an audible whisper, "a chaperon is sure to spoil sport. She doesn't mean any harm, but she does it by instinct." And of the two pairs no one budged. Evelyn was alone among these young conspirators, and the vulgar commentator who had sought to make himself agreeable by putting her terrors into words. She wandered a little further upon the hill-side, and gathered a handful of the white Grass of Parnassus, and the little blue orchid which is to be found on these hills, to give herself a countenance, not knowing how to act or what to do; whether to speak to her husband or to endeavour in her own person to divide the bonds which had grown up so fast. But how could she do this? What did they care for what she said, these independent young people? What hold had she over them, one way or another? And yet it would be said that she had been the chief actor in everything, that it was she who had thrown them together; she who had plotted to throw James Rowland's wealth into the hands and house of the Saumarez. The thought was intolerable; her whole mind cried out against it, protesting that it was not to be borne; but how was she to free herself from this knot in which she was enveloped? What was she to do?

## CHAPTER XXVI

IT need scarcely be said that the young Saumarez had been early made acquainted with Rankin's cottage in the wood, and with the wonderful qualities of the "sma'" family which he kept about him. The humours of Roy and Dhu were by this time among the most cheerful features of the house of Rosmore. That little pair went tumbling over each other with ferocious curiosity into every corner, sniffing and investigating: they gave each other the word when, in the far distance, a carriage began to grind, or a footstep to disturb the gravel approaching the door—and flew like two balls of fur, with two little pairs of gleaming eyes and no legs to speak of, helter-skelter, head-over-heels, to defend the house with ferocious, if infantile, barking. They walked out with Mrs. Rowland when she went out upon the lawn, making futile efforts to get upon the edge of her dress, and so be carried along as in a triumphal car on the silken train that touched the ground. They superintended every setting out and returning home, all but opening the door of the carriage when their mistress appeared. Archie had given them up to her with a sort of revulsion of feeling, kicking them from him when he found that the doggies hung on to his step-mother's skirts in spite of all other blandishments. He addressed them only in kindly intercourse when she was out of the way, but when she appeared, gave a kick to one and tossed the other down out of his hands. They had this quality, that they never were hurt, always came up again in a jovial entanglement of legs and hair, and were not too proud to talk to any one who would talk to them. Even the solemn butler, of whom Archie always continued to stand in awe, had been seen in a corner on his knees with a supply of biscuits, endeavouring to teach them to beg; which was an unsuccessful effort, since the little soft unformed backbones were as yet unfit for the effort. The young visitors, it is needless to say, were at once initiated into the worship of Roy and Dhu, and to become the happy possessors of other members of the family had early become the ambition of both Rosamond and Eddy—genuine on her part, perhaps only a pretext on his. For the worship of the dog is a very widespread and varied rite, followed by some out of a real understanding of those faithful, little-discriminating, and often puzzled retainers of humanity, but by many out of pure vacuity and for love of the inferior company of grooms and kennel-keepers, who are the retainers, in their turn, of the nobler breed. It was natural that Eddy should gravitate towards a place where the dull hours were to be got through by such means. And Rosamond liked the little humorous creatures, and was amused by the old gamekeeper, and had pleasure in the quaint unknown aspect of the cottage life. Besides all these,

when they escaped one morning together from the house, at a moment when Marion was out of the way, and Archie occupied, there was a little pleasure in the mere act of escaping and in the opportunity for consultations of their own. More than half their month in Rosmore was now over, and they had occasion for a little mutual understanding. It was a crisp morning of late October, very still, hoar frost white in all the hollows, and not yet melted into dew on the trees. Heaps of yellow leaves had come down in the night, and lay like gold at the foot of the now thin and trembling birches. The red trunks of the fir-trees came out warmly in the sharpness of the atmosphere, and the big branches of the rowan-berries drooped in consciousness of the approaching fall.

"What luck," said Eddy, "to get off for once without those other two, as old Rowland calls them, at our heels."

Rosamond assented briefly, but added, by way of qualification, "It is you generally who are at Marion's heels."

"Look here, Rose," said the brother, "you know the governor better than I do. What was his object in sending you and me here?"

"To get rid of us for a month, and have no responsibility," said Rosamond promptly.

"Oh, come, that's not reason enough for him. Did he mean me to make up to this little thing here? I suppose she's made of money—at least the father is; but what he'll give her for her fortune is an unknown quantity. I don't think he is very fond of her; do you? And I say, how old is Mrs. Rowland?—something would depend on that."

"How should I know how old Mrs. Rowland is; and what would it matter if she were as old as—father himself?"

"She must be near it," said Eddy thoughtfully, "or he would not have gone after her in his young days. Of course if she has no children, don't you see, it makes all the difference. Let's assume that she'll have no children: then he must leave all his money between those two, and that would not be bad. If I am to marry for money, I don't mean to let myself go cheap."

"You would be worth so very much to any woman!" said Rosamond in high disdain.

"I am worth a decent sum," said Eddy, "which is more than you are, for as much as you think of yourself; I and the old tumble-down house, which is what silly people like you admire so much—when the governor hops off. If this new place does him a great deal of good, as he believes it will, I shan't have such a good chance."

"Poor father!" said Rosamond, but with perfect composure, "it is a pity to raise his hopes."

"So I think," said Eddy: "whe you've had *that* before you for so long, you ought to be able to make up your mind to it. And it isn't as if he did not have his fling in his day. However,

the question is, what did he mean when he sent us here? Was it you or was it me?"

"What do you mean by me?" said Rosamond with irritation; "father knows quite well what I am going to do."

"Oh yes, I believe you!" said Eddy, "doctoring or something, isn't it? That is all bosh. You must just do like the rest. The question is, will old Rowland divide the money? when the one would be as good as the other, and I shouldn't mind very much. But if the girl has only a little bit of a fortune, and the boy all the rest—that indicates you, my dear; and as you are always admiring the country, I suppose you are making up your mind to your fate?"

"I would not marry Archie Rowland if there was not another man in the world," said Rosamond calmly. "Indeed, you may say there is not another man in the world, for I have no intention of marrying at all."

"Then you are treating him as badly as can be," said Eddy, "and you ought to be turned out of the house."

"I!" said Rosamond, raising her calm eyebrows a little. "Why? It is only men who are pulled up for behaving badly. I am bringing him into shape. He is a great deal better already, and you will see he will behave quite decently at the ball."

"If we could only find out," said Eddy, who after all was but moderately interested in that side of the question which did not concern himself, "whether old Rowland means to divide the money! I should think he would, an old fellow with a sense of justice, and who has made his own money. Why shouldn't the girl have as much as the boy?"

"Why shouldn't I have Gilston as well as you? That," said Rosamond, "cuts both ways."

"That's quite a different thing," said Eddy. "Gilston isn't money, the more's the pity; I wish it was."

"You may be very glad it is not; for it would soon be gone in that case, and nothing would be left."

"Well," said Eddy, reflectively, "it's always bait to catch a fish; no money, but a fine old house in the country, and a good name. The question is," he said with much gravity, "whether it's good enough to spend all that upon this little girl here, and perhaps find out at the end that she was no such prize after all? Why can't one go honestly to the man and ask him, 'What do you mean to give your daughter?'"

"You might try," said Rosamond, with a laugh.

"And get turned out of the house! They would do it in France and never think twice; but in England it must be love, forsooth—Love!" said Eddy, with great disdain. "What is there to love in a little chit like that?"

"She is a pretty little thing," said Rosamond, philosophically, "and she is quick enough. She would soon be just like other people, if she were about in town for a little. But, Eddy, what

is the use of talking when you are far too young to marry? At your age father could not have intended that."

"I shall soon be old enough to be pulled up," said Eddy, "on my own account. Don't you know I'll come of age in the beginning of the year? After that no one can come on the governor for my infant wants, don't you know. I wish they would: he wouldn't give them a farthing, and I should get all the fun; but they are far too cute for that. This Johnson fellow, don't you know—"

"The don?" said Rosamond; "has he lent you money? I thought these men had never any money to lend."

"Oh, that depends!" said Eddy. He burst into a great laugh, but immediately restrained himself. "He could get me into a pretty scrape if he liked, so I must keep friends with him. I mean to get Mother Rowland to ask him to the ball."

"How dare you call her Mother Rowland?" said the girl, stamping her foot.

"Oh, dare! I dare do—whatever suits me," said the young man. "Look here," he added, "I don't want you to dance with him all the same."

Rosamond turned upon her brother and gave him a look of scorn. It was not often that she condescended to look at any one to whom she was talking; but her glance was very direct and keen when she took the trouble. And she did not make any reply. They were by this time at the entrance to the game-keeper's cottage, and she swept in at the always open door. "May we come in?" she condescended to say, but did not pause for an answer. Old Rankin was sitting up in bed, taking his forenoon refreshment: which he himself described as "supping a ween broth."

"Oh, you're welcome, my young leddy. Ye will have come about the dowg; but I think it is mair civil, in an ordinary way, if you would just chap at the door."

"That's what I say," said Eddy; "but she takes her own way. I hope you're better, Rankin, and no rheumatism. It's not so cold, for there's no wind this morning; but the hoar frost is still lying under the trees."

"Ay," said Rankin, "there will be rain the morn. These white frosts aye brings rain, no to say that it's ever sweered to come. I'm muckle obliged to you for asking for me. You're the only one of the young folk at the House that ever minds I am a man. And a very ill man. They think I'm some kind of a creature for producin' dowgs."

"I am very sorry for you," said Rosamond; "my father is like you, he cannot move; but he does not like people to ask him how he is."

"Ay, ay, ye hae a father like me? Poor gentleman, I'm sure he has my compassion," said Rankin, "especially if he has no favourite purshoot like mine that makes the time pass."

"Well, let us see your favourite purshoot," said Eddy ; "let us see them. They are great fun, the little beasts."

"I am no reduced to that stage of intelligence," said the gamekeeper, "to call the breeding o' dowgs a purshoot. I just leave that to nature. What I really am, and I'm proud o't, is an antiquary. There's no many things ye can bring to me in the way of antiquities that would puzzle me. I've seen when half o' this," he laid his hand on a paper on the bed, "was my writing —whiles questions and whiles answers. It's maybe no a profitable kind of study. I make nothing by it in the way of money ; but it's real entertaining. I'm just as pleased when a number comes in with me, answering a' the scholars and putting them right, or them answering me and putting me right, as if it was so much siller in my pooch."

"Oh ay," said his wife, in the background, "you have had an awfu' stroke with the papers, John Rankin ; but it would have sert ye muckle better if you had written something that would be of use, and got a little by it. Good siller is out o' place in nobody's pooch."

"Do you mean to say that you—write for the papers ?" said Rosamond.

"That do I, my bonny leddy ; and ye should just recommend a study like mine to your father, poor gentleman. You'll see many a thing from me there. I'm Ros-beg, that's the name I took ; which means the little Ros, just as Rosmore means the muckle Ros, and Ben Ros the hill. I'm grand upon Hieland antiquities, and considered one o' the first authorities. Ye'll see, ye'll see," said Rankin, waving his hand as he held out the paper to his visitor. It was a very well-known paper, one in which a great many questions are put and answered. The reader will not need to be told its highly respectable name.

"Is it you that has written all this about some bard—Donald—I can't say his name ? And there's an answer from Ben Cruachan, and one from Mr. Davies, and G. Johnson—oh, Eddy ! St. Chad's, Cambridge !"

"I say," Eddy had begun, "hand us out some of the doggies, and don't talk ;" but when he saw the page which Rosamond held out to him, he laughed out till the cottage rang. "Oh ho," he said, "Johnson ! Here is a lark ! Johnson ! Now we'll have some fun. I say, gamekeeper ! Johnson's here."

"What is your will, sir ?" said Rankin, with great dignity. The purveyor of dogs could take a joke, but not the contributor to *Notes and Queries*. In the latter capacity, John Rankin veiled his bonnet to none.

"Why, Johnson, I tell you. Johnson's here ! Don't you know what I mean ? Johnson, the don," and Eddy laughed again till the tears ran down his cheeks. "I'll bring him to see you, old fellow. You shall have your fight out, and I'll back you, old boy, to him, six to one."

"My learned correspondent !" said Rankin, with a look of

excitement. And then he turned to Rosamond. "Your brother is a wild laddie, but I suppose what he says is true?"

"I suppose so," said Rosamond, with great gravity, while Eddy did his best to subdue the convulsions of laughter into which he had fallen. His sister was impatient of Eddy's joke, and of the whole matter. "Let us, please, see the little dogs," she said.

"Yes; but I'm far more interested about the other thing," said Rankin, "for I would like well to put forth my views in a mair extended form. The space of the paper is real limited. They will sometimes leave out just your maist conclusive argument. Dod! but I'd like a crack with Mr. Johnson fine."

"I wish you would not laugh like a fool," said Rosamond, frowning. "What is there to laugh about? Mr. Johnson is not nearly so nice-looking as Mr. Rankin, and I think he'll be disappointed in him. But you need not go on making a ridiculous noise in this way. I wish to have one of the little dogs to give to a lady I know. She will be very kind to it. She is my grandmamma. She likes her dogs better than anything else in the world."

"The dogues are fine creatures," said Rankin; "but no to be made a first objeck. I dinna agree with that. A leddy that likes her dogs better than anything else will just probably spile them, baith their health and their moral nature. Ye will observe, mem, that I am not wanting to sell my dogues. I have aye plenty of customers for them: the first houses in the land has my dogues. It's no as if I was keen to sell. She will no doubt feed them in a ridiculous way—sweet biscuits and made dishes, instead of good porridge and a bone at a time. Na, I think I'll no give you one for your grandmammaw, though I dinna like to disappoint a bonnie young leddy. If it was for yoursel' now—"

"I would like to have this one for myself," said Rosamond, as the little half-blind puppy curled on her lap and nibbled at her fingers. "It will be like little Roy at Rosmore."

"That will it!" said old Rankin in the fervour of generous acquiescence, "or maybe even finer. And ye shall have it, ye shall have it! I will give ye my directions, and ye'll make a principle of carrying them out. If ye do that, ye'll keep the little beastie in good health, and aye clean and pleasant—and he'll be a pleasure to ye a' his days. There are no finer bred dogues in a' Scotland, though I say it that maybe shouldn't. And if ye'll be guided by me, ye'll just call him Roy too. It is a fine handy little name. I call them all the same, like Dandy Dinmont's terriers in Sir Walter, as maybe ye will remember. It's a kind of token of the race: and ye may make real pleasant acquaintances about the world, or maybe, wha kens, be directed to a braw gentleman that will make ye a fine partner for life—just by the circumstance of having twa doggies by the name of Roy, baith from Rosmore!"

Rankin ended with a faint guffaw partly at his own humour, partly in the emotion of giving up to a stranger one of his cherished infants. He dived again into the mysterious receptacle in which the puppies feebly squealed and whined, within reach of his hand, and produced, all warm and blurred from that nest, another ball of fur. "Ye can tak' your choice," he said; "this ane is of the line of Roy as well as that ane. It is the last I have, and I dinna see my way to pleasure Lady Jean till maybe geyan weel on in the next year. If ye were to fancy the twa, I wadna grudge them to ye: for I think you know what you're about with dogues. Would you like to have it? Oh, it's not to please me but to please you. I can dispose of the double of what I have got, or am like to get. There's not a person comes to Rosmore but is keen for one of Rankin's dogues. But I'm that pleased with you and your sense, that, if ye like, I'll let you have the twa."

Rosainond accepted the favour in her stately way. "Have we any money, Eddy?" she said. It did not in the least trouble her when her brother for answer turned his pockets inside out. "It does not matter in the least," she said. "I should like to have them both, and the money will come somehow." She was not touched with doubt as Archie had been about the possibilities of paying. She was aware that she was poor, and had not a penny; but most things she wanted were procured for her in one way or another. This had been Rosamond's experience since ever she remembered, and naturally it gave her mind a great calm.

"And yon you were saying about Mr. Johnson?" said the gamekeeper, turning to Eddy when the bargain was made.—"Wha's that chapping at the door?" he added impatiently. "Some gangrel body with an e'e to the dogues, and muckle Roy out there just a senseless beast that bids a' body welcome, and hasna a bark in him. Janet, woman! wha's that chappin' at the door?"

"It's I," said a voice that made Eddy start. "It's a friend—of your master's, my good man."

"My maister's!" said Rankin. "Wha's that, I would like to ken? Janet, just shut the door upon his nose, the uncivil person. My maister's! It will be some English towerist body that kens no better," he added condescendingly with a wave of his hand. "You may let him come in."

"Why, Rankin," cried Eddy, "you are in luck! This is the very gentleman—of St. Chad's, Cambridge. Johnson, come in—you're in luck too, I can tell you. Here's the champion that holds another view. You're on the Welsh side, aren't you?—here's the great authority, Ros-beg, that takes the other view."

"What?" said Johnson, coming in a little blinded from the winterly sunshine outside into the comparative gloom of the cottage, where the window was half covered with the drawn blind to keep out the sun. Mrs. Rankin had a notion, shared

by many simple housekeepers, that the sun puts out the fire. "Eh—ah, who are you? I'll swear that's Eddy Saumarez's voice."

Rosamond rose up from her place by the gamekeeper's bedside, and put back the puppy. The very sound of this man's voice offended her. To be sure it was the usual thing for everybody to say Eddy Saumarez. She had seen him discussed by that name in the sporting papers, the horrible crumpled things which he left about—there was nothing surprising in it; but there was something exasperating in the sound of his voice.

"Oh, Miss Saumarez," he said, stepping back a little. Her presence startled him as much as his appearance exasperated her.

"I think," she said, "as you've found your friend, I'll go back by myself, Eddy. And good-bye, Mr. Rankin. I will pay the greatest attention to your instructions when you send me the dogs."

Then without taking any notice of the intruder, except by the slightest of bows, Rosamond turned and walked away. She waved her hand to Janet, but Janet was accustomed to scant ceremony, and was not offended. Rosamond was vaguely uneasy about this man and his frequent re-appearance, and Eddy's intention of having him asked to Rosmore. Of course Mrs. Rowland would do it, if she were asked. Rosamond was not aware of the impression he had already made on Evelyn's mind. Nor had she any doubts as to the truth of Eddy's description. Everything, she was aware, had changed at the University as at other places. There were no tests, and anybody might become a don. Of course, if he was a don, there was no reason why he should not be given an invitation for any entertainment. But only she, Rosamond, would not countenance him. She would neither dance with him nor talk with him. His appearance meant no good to Eddy if he were a hundred times a don. Eddy was a boy whom it was impossible to keep out of mischief, whatever happened. If anything went wrong, she felt sure her father would hold her responsible, which would be extremely unjust, for what could she do? Thus she reasoned with herself as she walked very quickly through the woods, hurrying home. Home! it was not home. In about ten days or so, this visit would be over, and if Eddy played any tricks, probably Mrs. Rowland would never ask them again. And Eddy was almost certain to play tricks of one kind or another. His flirtation with Marion must come to some end. And what *did* father mean by sending him there? Was it intended that he should marry Marion? was Marion rich enough to make father wish that Eddy should marry her? These questions became disagreeably present with Rosamond as she walked back to the house, and gave her a great feeling of insecurity and discomfort of every kind. It really was not safe to go anywhere with Eddy: he was sure to get himself into

scrapes, and have disreputable acquaintances appearing after him. A curve of annoyance came over Rosamond's smooth brow. It did not occur to her, however, as a thing possible that any blame in any other way could turn upon herself.

## CHAPTER XXVII

"Come along, Johnson," said Eddy; "don't be shy. The nature of great scholars, Rankin, is that they're dreadfully shy, don't you know. A man that you couldn't put out by the heaviest argument will give in at the sight of a young lady. That's like our friend here: he thinks every woman he sees is going to bite him, or—marry him, perhaps, out of hand, as you do in Scotland, don't you know."

"There is a great deal o' nonsense prevalent about Scotch marriages," said Rankin. "It's nothing of the kind. Come away ben, Mr. Johnson, I'm real glad to see you. Dod! he's no so lo'esome in his ain person that he should be frichtened for the leddies; but study's mair embellishin' for the mind than the body. Come in by, sir, and gi'e me a shake o' your hand. You and me's had mony a controversy, but nane sae bitter but that we may meet as friends."

"Eh! what's the man saying? What have I got to do with him?" cried Johnson, stumbling in, with eyes as yet unaccustomed to the light.

"I tell you," said Eddy, "of course you never expected to find here the great Ros-beg, your opponent on the question of—What question was it, Rankin? Don't attempt to hide your honours, Johnson, my boy. Everybody here knows you're Johnson of St. Chad's. You have only got to behave yourself as such, and recognize the power of learning whenever you see it. This, I tell you, is Ros-beg, your adversary on—"

"I say, Eddy, none of your humbug! I've got to talk to you on serious business, and here you are agoing on with your pranks to drive a man out of his senses."

"I have nothing to do with it," said Eddy. "This gentleman here in the bed, though you mightn't think it, is a great scholar, Johnson. He's driven you into a corner and holds you there. We know what you mean when you pretend ignorance. It's because you're shut up. You might find an argument if you were in your own study among all your books at St. Chad's; but here, face to face with the great Ros-beg, you've not got a word to say."

"Be canny with him, be canny with him, sir," said Rankin, a glow of complacency on his face. "A man's no to be expected to be ready wi' his weapons just at a moment's notice. Coming into a Highland cottage, how was he to think he was to be con-

fronted by an adversary? Na, na; great allowances must be made. Sit down, sir, and tak' time and come to yourself."

"By Jove!" said Johnson, with most un-don-like force, "I think you mean to drive me mad, Eddy Saumarez! One day it's with your ladies, and another day it's with this old—"

"Let him get it oot, let him get it oot," cried Rankin. "Oh, ay! it's easier to abuse your opponent than to answer him; that's a trick weel kent in controversy. An auld—what, sir?—get it oot; it will ease your mind, and it will do me nae hairm."

"Johnson, you fool, can't you see that you've got a character to keep up?" cried Eddy, half-choking with laughter. The youth was full of mischievous delight in his mystification, but he was not without a meaning behind it, which was the thing most interesting to his present victim.

"I see your game, Mr. Eddy," said Johnson; "but you ain't going to get the better of me. Be done with that stuff, and come out and let us have a bit of serious talk. You know as well as I do what's hanging over your head. If you can't bring him something to stop his mouth, that old cove will—or give him security as you're to be married before a certain day. I don't mind who I speak before. If you'll not listen to me one time, you'll have to listen another!" cried Johnson, working himself up into energy. Eddy stood facing the light with the ruddy glow of the flames playing over him, his somewhat worn and pale young face broadened with laughter. The effect of his youth, and perhaps a special impishness of nature, gave him a delight in mischief which the most serious emergency could not destroy.

"I told you," he said, "this man's always got his thoughts filled with marrying—especially in Scotland, where you can always do it at a moment's notice. When he's not in terror for himself he's in terror for me."

"Ye may deliver your soul o' a' such terrors," said Rankin angrily. "There's naebody will marry ye here but the minister; and him no afore a' inquiry's made. There's an awfu' deal o' nonsense prevalent about Scotch marriages. It's a question I would have no objection to argue oot with ye, if ye prefer that to a mair learned subject," said the gamekeeper with a disdainful wave of his hand.

"I argue!" cried Johnson; "I'll not argue; it ain't my line. I'm not a parson, nor I ain't a lawyer; I'm a plain man, by Jove! I've got my own business, and I know how to do it; and this I tell you, Master Eddy, if you ain't ready with that cash, and before the month's out, come by it as ye will—"

"Can't you hold your d—d tongue! Can't you see what's expected of you!" said Eddy in a rapid whisper.—"Rankin," he said, raising his voice, "I'm ashamed of my man. He hasn't pluck enough to come up to the scratch. The sight of you has routed him hand and foot. There's no spirit left in him at all."

"He never said a truer word," said Rankin, "than when he

said he couldna argue. I'm glad he has that much knowledge o' himself. It was aye a wonder to me that the editor let him in wi' his *disjectae membrae* and hotchpotch o' reasoning. I'm no surprised, for my pairt ; but after this exheebition, I'm thinking it would be just as weel to tak' the cratur away. It's a'e thing to ha'e the gift o' sound argument, which is no given to everybody, and it's another thing to be ceevil to a man in his ain house. Maybe, however, he thinks because I'm here in a cottage and no able for any exertion, that it's no me. But I can gi'e him evidence that it's me." Rankin put up his hand to a box of papers fastened within his reach by the wall, and dived into it, much as, on the other hand, he dived into the nest of his dogs. "There's the editor's ain hand of write addressed to John Rankin, Esquire, which will maybe convince him. No that it matters a brass bodle to me, if a man, when he's worsted in arguments, forgets his mainners. It's just of as little consequence as the yelping of thae beasties of dogues." Rankin took the puppies, who had been stumbling, with little whines and sniffs, over the heights and hollows of his own person, and dropped them one after another into what seemed some invisible pocket, their disappearance acting as a sort of energetic punctuation to his words. The letter, which he had flung towards the stranger, was indeed directed as he had said, and disclosed as it fell on the bed a number of proof-sheets or cuttings, very conclusive to the instructed eye. But Mr. Johnson did not look at them at all. He said, "What have I to do with the old—gentleman's letters," substituting that word for "fool," which he had intended to use, on the compulsion of Eddy's eye.

"Then, good-bye, Rankin, I'll soon come back," said Eddy, shaking the old gamekeeper's hand ; "but, look here, I'll bring no more of my grand friends to see you from the Universities, if you are going to crumple them up like this."

Rankin laughed the satisfied laugh of the controversialist who has demolished his adversary. "He hadna a word to say for himself, no' a word. It's one thing compiling nonsense out o' books in a library, and meeting a man face to face. Ye just saw for yoursel' that the beggar hadna a word to say."

"Eh me," said Janet, who had gone out to the door to see the visitors fairly off, "that was an awfu' like man to be one of your great scholars, as ye call them. I've seen the college gentlemen in my young days, and fine lads some o' them were. I wadna have believed that was a college gentleman if it had been tell't to me."

"And what do you know about it?" said Rankin, scornfully. "There's the evidence that he just would not face me, the moment he heard who I was. I never thought he had the root of the maitter in him. Just a blethering retailer o' other men's opinions, no fit to haud his ain in any real controversy. I'm a wee disappointed, for it would have been a grand sensation to have it oot with ane of those Oxford ignoramus in my ain

house ; but ye see he could not put out a finger without his authorities at his back.—I think I'll maybe take a pickle mair broth."

"If you's a college man and a gentleman," said Janet, "I'll just allow that I never was mair deceivit in my life."

Eddy took his friend's arm as they issued out from the shadow of the cottage. "Why didn't you show fight?" he said, "you fool ! You can act well enough when you like. Why didn't you be civil and draw him out? He'd have done all the talk himself, and you'd have saved your character as a college fellow and a don."

"There's been enough of this nonsense," said Johnson. "I tried it on with the lady the other day, and I put my foot into it. She didn't believe I was a don, as you call it, any more—than any other person would. What was I to say to that old fool ? I didn't know what he was talking about. Look here, we must have some talk serious, none of your humbug. I have my orders as clear as daylight. If he can't pay up—"

"I know," said Eddy, impatiently, "I know ! I've heard all that before."

"You'll not hear it again, my fine fellow, or else it'll be before the judge for something that is more ticklish than debt. Don't you know there's that little bit of paper as was refused at the bank. No assets, just your luck to keep you from the Old Bailey. But he's got it all the time. If you're safe to marry the railway man's daughter, perhaps I might get him persuaded to wait. For I'm your friend, Eddy Saumarez, you know as I always stand your friend when you don't play any of your tricks. I can't go bail for him that he'll do that; for what with putting him off, and never answering his letters, and letting things swing, he's in the temper of the very——; but if it's certain and settled, and the figure of her fortune known, and all that——"

"You saw for yourself how things were going," said Eddy, not without a faint blush of shame, "the other day on the hill."

"Oh, I saw you, fast enough—carrying on. But when I said to the lady, 'That's a case if ever there was one,' she looked at me as if she could have knocked me down. 'If you mean it's an engagement,' she says, as sharp as anything, 'you're mistaken, and it wouldn't be allowed for a minute on either side.'"

"You put that into her head, you everlasting fool !" cried Eddy. And then with an effort of self-control, or rather with the natural facility of his easy temper, he added, bursting into a laugh, "She's the stepmother, and they hate her all round. The more she opposes it the more it's sure to be, so you see there's more things in heaven and earth, Johnson, than are in your philosophy. What she says is just the thing that will never come to pass. I say, if you'll behave a little decent, and get up the character, I'll make her send you an invitation to the big ball !"

"The ball!"

"I know you're fond of high life, and seeing smart people : and you can act when you like. Now look here, put a good face upon it and let's have a little more time. Write to him that you've got a promise of having everything settled if you wait till after the 30th, and that you're going to a ball at Rowland's house under my wing ; and then you'll wire about the engagement and all that as soon as ever it comes off. You'll never have such a chance again," said Eddy ; "*crème de la crème*, my boy, and all that sort of thing."

"People of the place," said Johnson, with a sneer.

"People of the place ! Well, I hope when it's Clydesdale and his lot, that's good enough for you. And perhaps you call the Duke of Arran one of the people of the place. So he is, for it all belongs to him : and the Huntingshaws and the Herons, who, I rather think, have been heard of even in London town."

"Oh, well," said Johnson, with half-eager, half-reluctant acquiescence ; "but if that lady is the one to give the invitations, you will never get her to ask me."

"We'll see about that," said Eddy, complacently. "I think I know what I'm about."

"You know a deal too well what you're about. For a fellow of your age, you are the oldest fellow and the most artful I ever knew. I do believe it's only to gain time, and that there's nothing in it. Carrying on with a girl is nothing to you ; you can get 'em to believe you when another fellow hasn't even the chance to have a hearing. There's that tall one, your sister, looks at me as if I was the dirt under her feet. I'll tell you what, if you'll make her give me a dance at this thundering ball of yours, I'll do it—whatever the governor may say."

"Well, you can ask her," said Eddy, in lightness of heart, "like any other gentleman. You don't want an introduction, because you've met her before. A woman can't refuse without being ill-bred, and nobody could ever say of the Saumarez that they were ill-bred. Of course she'll dance with you—if you ask her," he said, with a laugh.

"What's that laugh for ?" said Johnson, suspiciously.

"Oh, come, if a man isn't allowed to laugh ! It's for the fun of the thing. I've seen you in a good many queer circumstances, but I never saw you at a society ball dancing with girls—of that sort, don't you know. I'll get you an introduction to the Duchess," cried Eddy, "and you can ask her to dance. By Jove ! what fun it will be ! I shouldn't wonder if you had what they call a great success. But mind, whatever you do, you must learn up the part."

"Where shall I get it ?" said Johnson. The idea of success in the world which was "smart" turned his head. The thought went through his mind that it might be but the beginning of triumph. The Duchess, if she found his dancing to her mind, might invite him during the season. She might ask him to the

Cumbraes, that princely mansion. The light swam in Johnson's eyes. He felt as if he were on the verge of a new world. He could learn a part with any man, and mind his cues and enter into his rôle. Where could he get it? He ran over all the plays he knew, which was saying a good deal, but he could not remember the part of a don. "Hang it all," he said, "I wish you had introduced me as a plunger or a Guardsman, or something of that sort. I could have got 'em as easy as look at 'em; but I don't remember no don."

"There are plenty in novels," said Eddy.

"Oh, novels!—I don't read any except the yellow kind. I say, how d'ye dress the part? Is it a long coat and a white tie? or what is it? I don't know nothing about it," said Johnson, falling in his anxiety into the dialect of his kind.

"In the evening," said Eddy, "all gentlemen dress alike, except when they're parsons. Johnson of St. Chad's is not a parson. Probably in the day-time he wears an easy coat, and smokes a pipe. But we'd better leave that. You only want your evening things—I suppose they're decently cut—and a flower in your coat; but mind you have not a bouquet like a coachman at a drawing-room."

"I think I know enough for that," said the novice; "but you'd better get me one of those dashed novels if I'm to learn up the part."

They walked on in silence for a few minutes towards the moor; great visions filled the mind of Johnson. "I say," he resumed after a while, "couldn't you get me asked for the shooting one day? The young fellow ain't much of a swell, whatever the rest of them may be; and I should like to shoulder a gun on a real moor, just for once in a way. It's a thing to have done. The governor would like it too. 'My son's up shooting in Scotland,' he'd tell everybody, 'with some of his smart friends.'"

"He can say it all the same, whether or not," said Eddy.

"That's true; but it feels much nicer when there's something in it. I say—I don't mind standing a sovereign to the game-keeper, if you'll manage that. I'd give a sovereign any day to have some birds to send up to town with that heather stuff round 'em, and a label, 'From A. Johnson, Esquire.'"

"You had better give the sovereign to me," said Eddy, "if I am to take the trouble of it. Well, I'll try—and you'll have to get up that part too, Johnson, the don on the moors."

"Oh, I ain't frightened for that. Do they ask you to shoot at the Cumbraes—that's the Duke's place?" said Johnson, with greater and greater visions of delight rising before his eyes.

"They don't ask me, but they might ask you," cried Eddy, with a peal of laughter. "'In for a penny, in for a pound.' When once you get to know a Duke, all the rest follows like clockwork."

"That was what I thought," Johnson said modestly. He marched on by Eddy's side for some time over the heather.

Then he paused, and looked his companion in the face. "Mind," he said, "I don't say as I shan't like all this very much, and if I get on, I shall never forget as it was you as launched me, Master Eddy. But that's not to interfere with business : you'll have to keep to your day and square your account, or else the governor will be down upon you, and there's not a little thing in the whole affair as won't be brought to the light of day."

"And who will that harm most?" said Eddy. "I'll pay up, of course ; but who do you think would suffer most—I, only a boy when you got me into your accursed hands, or *him*, an old bloated, money-lending, sixty per cent., blood-sucking—"

"Keep a civil tongue in your head. Do you think he'll mind what the papers may say? Look here, Eddy Saumarez, why don't you go to your governor and make a clean breast of it, and settle it up so as nothing should ever be brought against you again? You've got a lot of relations that wouldn't like to be dragged through the mud."

"Do you think they mind what the papers may say?" said Eddy, sardonically ; "when that's the case on both sides, there can't be much to be done either way."

"Well, smart people don't, somehow," said Johnson, "no more than we do—they're so used to it. It ain't my business to dictate how you're to do it, but somehow you'll have to do it. You may get the money how you please, but you must get it, and not a moment later than the 31st. Now that's settled, I can give my thoughts to getting up the part."

When he was left by his companion, Eddy went up by himself upon the moors, which was a kind of excursion he did not usually enjoy. He went up breasting the hill like a deer or a mountaineer, nor caring where he went, through ling and bracken, among the prickly whins, and over the treacherous quagmires of moss and bog. Something was in his mind which made him indifferent to all the accidents of the way. When he had reached the very top of the ridge he threw himself down upon the dark heather with his face upon the ground, falling as if he had been shot, and lay there for a few moments motionless as if he had died. Nature accommodates herself very easily to any vagary of rest. The dark figure seemed for a moment to disturb and break the line of vegetation, but had not been there a moment before the grasses and the ling seemed to take a new beginning, starting up from under him, the long myrtles rustling their heads, the Grass of Parnassus waving its white stars. So they would have done had he been dead, covering him over, hiding him in the bosom of the soil. He lay for a little while thus, harmonized and composed into quiet under the still touch of the hill, so that when he got up again he seemed to leave a broad and angry void where he had been. What passed in his mind while he buried his face in the coolness of the earth, and hid himself from the eye of day, it would be hard to tell—perhaps only the working of his quick brain as to what he could do in

the emergency in which he found himself, perhaps compunction, miserable thoughts of the past, more miserable reflections on the future. But nothing of this was visible when he raised himself from that momentary collapse. He sat down upon the heather with his face towards the lake, and pondered, clutching at his hair with both his hands, setting his elbows on his knees. What was it he was thinking of out there upon the lonely moor, not a living creature near him except the wild creatures on the hills, the insects in the moorland vegetation? His short-sighted eyes roamed vaguely over the heather, pausing upon here and there a gleam of water in a hollow, turning instinctively, like a child toward a light, to the deep loch lying far below. But he saw little or nothing with these wandering eyes. They were bent upon visionary objects, seeing scenes and visions which had nothing to do with the moor or the loch of Rosmore.

Presently Eddy took something from his pocket, a piece of paper with a few words upon it, which he studied intently. His eyes came back from their roaming to fix themselves intently, with the contraction of the eyebrows which marked their defect, upon the paper. They were sharp eyes though they were short-sighted, seeing everything within their limited range with a keenness and mastery of every detail quite unusual, a power of observation which was more precious than the longest sight. What was it he was trying to master? A few uninteresting words, nothing of the slightest importance. Then he took out a pencil and wrote something, repeating the same characters again and again. What was it? He kept the paper so cautiously in his hand that had he been startled by any intruder he could have doubled it up in a moment, and hidden it in his hollowed palm. It was somewhat strange to see such a precaution taken on the wide stretch of moor, which was as desolate as a moor could be, some part of it dark with the blistered stems of heather which had been burned, the rest dewy and glistening with the moisture with which a few days of rain had soaked the country. The very insects were hushed by the cold of the October afternoon. A few desolate cheepings low among the heather betrayed a lowly nest here and there. In the distance a road came like a black ribbon over a corner of the slope. Eddy sent another anxious look round him, and returned to his paper, writing the same letters over and over again. Was it the name of his love? What was it? He held it so carefully under the shadow of his hand that even had some one risen silently from the heather, and looked over his shoulder, it would have been difficult to see.

This was not exactly what happened. What happened was that—coming along the dark road in the distance, Eddy spied a figure, which made him start to his feet and hastily return to his pocket the little document. He sat down again, but with his face that way, watching who it was who was approaching. There was something in the outline and the gait, those points

which are all the short-sighted have to go upon, which seemed to indicate a person he knew. It was not the moment which Eddy would have chosen to encounter Archie Rowland, but there was something in his own occupation just suspended, and in the curious fancy which had brought him here, the object which he only knew, which made him eager to disarm any possible suspicion on the part of his hosts at Rosmore—which impelled him at least not to avoid the meeting. Suddenly he got up and began waving his arms about to attract the attention of the passer-by, who, pausing and standing still a moment to consider who called him, at length decided to change his course, and came towards the figure thus signalling to him across the summit of the hill.

## CHAPTER XXVIII

ARCHIE came over the hill, lifting his feet high among the heather. He had changed in his aspect a little since the old Glasgow days. For one thing he had changed his tailor, which always makes a great difference. And three months of the fresh Highland air and outdoor exercise, and something too of the growing habit of a little authority and command, and that of having things done for him, of saying to this man, go, and he goeth, and to another, come, and he cometh, had changed the looks of Archie. And another more subtle influence had changed him. His brow had cleared of an overhanging cloud, once too ready to come down at a moment's notice. He held his head more erect. It was not perhaps that he was in reality more sure of himself—but at least he had somehow acquired the air of being so—and he was of course more accustomed and at ease in the habits of his new life.

He could not think why he had been called in this way; and did not indeed recognize Eddy, whose presence here on the top of the moor was the last thing any one could have expected. Eddy was not fond of long walks. To stroll down to the beach with his hands in his pockets, and when he had got there, to sit on a rock and throw stones into the water, was the hardest exercise he generally indulged in, except a day's shooting now and then, when he showed himself, notwithstanding his indolence, as to the manner born—a thing which Archie could never do. But how he should have got up here without any motive was a thing which young Rowland could not understand. “Is it you?” he cried with surprise when he came near enough to recognize his guest.

“It's just me—which I perceive is the formula here,” cried Eddy. “I've no right to invite you to sit down, as this is your own place; but I can recommend that ling bush. It's dry, and

there is no gorse about to prick into your vitals. Are you in a hurry, or can you wait a bit here?"

"Oh, I am in no hurry," said Archie. "It's not easy to be in a hurry when you've got nothing to do."

"Do you think so? I'm always in a hurry and always late—though I have nothing to do."

"I suppose it's according to a man's nature," said Archie.

"Everything is that if you go to the bottom of things. You're one of the restless fellows that want to be doing—I don't. I love idleness," said Eddy, stretching himself back over the ling, with his arms extended over his head and his eyes on the sky. The sky was covered with clouds, yet there was a break of blue just over Eddy's head, which he regarded complacently as if it had been made for his special use.

"I was surprised to see you up so far—it's a good climb from the loch side."

"So it is," said Eddy; "it was not for want of something to do. So long as there's a billiard-table handy, thank heaven, you never need be without occupation. If there's nobody to have a game with, you can at least be improving your own play."

"I did not think of that," said Archie.

"No, for you don't appreciate billiards," cried the other, "which is a pity, for it's a fine game. I say, Rowland, when are we to have another day's shooting? This ball takes up a lot of time; but I hope you'll take me out on the hills at least one day again before I go?"

"When you like," Archie said shortly.

"Well, that's curt," said Eddy with a laugh. "And I always like, don't you know. By the way, I've got a sort of a—favour to ask you. I don't know what you'll say."

Archie did not make any reply, but looked up, waiting without much excitement for the demand, whatever it might be.

"Well, it's this," said Eddy embarrassed, which was almost a new sensation to him, and gave him a sense of youth and freshness which in its way was delightful. "I don't know what you'll say to me for asking such a thing. It's not as if you had your governor out and a lot of big-wigs. A couple of young fellows doesn't matter."

Archie kept his face towards his companion with the same look of indifferent expectation, but he said nothing to help him on.

"It is not even like an invitation to the house; and the ladies probably will not be coming out again."

There was faintly indicated on Archie's countenance a question as to this latter statement—a sort of interrogating curl in the curve of his eyebrows; but the young man was chary of his words, and spoke no more than was indispensable.

"It is getting late in the season you know," said Eddy, "and cold for them."

"They don't mind the cold," said Archie.

"Well, it's rather cutting up here, and Mrs. Rowland—isn't so young as the girls. However, I'm afraid they didn't care for my man when he appeared before. It was bad taste I allow, thrusting himself into the midst of our party. But I don't pretend that he's much in the way of breeding. He's a good fellow—enough—and he never had any opportunity of this sort of thing when he was younger. It's that man Johnson, don't you know. He's hanging about here. I am always knocking up against him. He would be awfully pleased if you'd ask him to come with us out shooting. And I don't think he'll do much harm."

"Oh," said Archie, "the college man."

"Yes," replied Eddy, wincing a little, "the college man." He had not minded at all promulgating that fiction to the ladies. It was immense fun. To do him justice it had been struck off on the spur of the moment, without any intention ; but to say it to Rowland, two fellows on the hillside, was a different matter. He began to pull up the tenacious roots of the ling with both hands, struggling with them, and did not meet Archie's eyes. Nothing could be more innocent than Archie's eyes, which suspected nothing. Archie had scarcely been conscious of Johnson's presence at all. He had made no mental remarks as to the breeding or want of breeding of the stranger. He had no theories about a college don. It is doubtful, indeed, whether he had any clear impression as to what that character was. Eddy added quickly, "He's a little uncouth. They don't see much society, these fellows. I would not mix him up with the ladies : but he would be awfully pleased—and when it's only two young fellows on a moor, you and me——"

"Oh, I have no objections," said Archie. "Ask him if you like, Saumarez ; it was hardly necessary to take the trouble of asking me."

"You are an awfully good fellow, Rowland!" said Eddy, struck with a faint and very temporary sense of shame.

"Oh, if that's all," cried Archie with a smile which lighted up his face. It pleased him that anybody should think so, and still more that Eddy Saumarez should think so. In the exhilaration of that encouragement he went a little further, as the simple giver pleased with his own liberality is so apt to do.

"If there is anything else we can do for him? I'll tell Roderick to see that it's all right. And we can go out any day you like. I'm not such a hearty sportsman as you. If it wasn't a kind of duty—but it's pleasant when somebody enjoys it," he said with a glow upon his brightened face.

"I enjoy it—down to the ground," said Eddy. "It's not that there's so very much game ; but then one has it all one's own way. Nobody poking in before you, saying, 'My bird!' and then a young fellow has to give in. You're a lucky dog, Rowland—the cock of the walk so far as the moor goes, and thought no end of at home."

"Do you think so?" said Archie, with a sort of painful gratification. "I'm afraid that's more than I can believe. I'm a disappointment to my father, Saumarez. I don't know what he expected, but he expected something very different from me."

"They are always like that," said Eddy, with the air of an authority. "They put you in a certain grind, and then they look out for something quite different. I am just the product of my training; but the governor jaws at me as if I were a monster; though if all tales be true, he could have given me odds, at my worst."

Eddy spoke with the composed expression of a man whose worst had been very bad, and who had fathomed all the secrets of life. Archie could not but look on with a certain respect, though his blameless mind recoiled a little from this man of knowledge. He had no experiences of his own save of the most trifling kind, to produce.

"The worst of it all," said Eddy, "is the money. We have all that's nice, you know, in the way of living, and places to go to and so forth, but never any money in our pockets. I don't know if the governor himself is much better. It all goes on quite smoothly, and I suppose it gets paid. I don't know. I never have a penny to bless myself with."

"Oh, there's no want here in that way," said Archie. He took out a card-case from his pocket, and took a piece of paper from it. "Here is something my father gave me this morning, for extra expenses he said. I told him I had no extra expenses, but it was no use. And I don't know what to do with it," Archie said; "you can't buy anything at Rosmore. I'll pay it into my bank, which is his bank too, and there it will lie."

"Good life, Rowland! No use!" cried Eddy, with eager eyes fixed upon the cheque. He took it out of his companion's hand, and examined it, gloating over every line. "One hundred pounds, James Rowland," he cried. "I wish I had a few signatures like that. I wish he'd take a few pieces of paper out of his pocket of this description and offer them to me."

"I dare say he would," said Archie, calmly, "if he knew you were in such great need of them; but you are just romancing on that score."

"Romancing!" cried Eddy. "I romancing! It shows how little you know. You can't think, Rowland, what temptations a young fellow is subjected to. And then all sorts of harpies about, thirsting for your blood. Before you know where you are, they've got you hard and fast, and after that you never dare call your soul your own. Why this fellow John——. I mean a man in London, has got his horrid thumb on me!—Romancing!" cried Eddy, "I'd give my little finger for a bit of paper like that—and one a day as long as they lasted for ever and ever."

To see Archie's countenance while his companion was speaking

was an experience in its way. He raised himself erect the first minute out of his habitual lounging and careless attitude. His brow cleared more and more. He pushed his hat back, revealing it with the heavy ruddy hair, pushed back too, and standing up in a thick crest : his eyes so often overcast, or gleaming out in sudden gleams, half-timorous, half-defiant, were bent steadily upon Eddy's face with something celestial in their blueness—his mother's eyes. He had never looked out upon the world so openly, so free, with so little self-consciousness, since the first day when his father's heart had risen at the first look of him in the humble parlour at Sauchiehall Road ; and there was something of a new-developed soul, something higher, something deeper in that look now.

"Would ye that ?" he said, in his native tone and accent. He took up the paper where Eddy had laid it down, spread out upon the ling for admiration. "Your little finger would be of no use to me," he said ; "but if ye want this so much, and I don't want it at all, take it, Saumarez. You are very welcome to it, and it's little use to me."

Eddy raised his eyes suddenly, with a gleam of eager covetousness, to the other's face. They were hazel eyes, with a peculiar reddish gleam, and flashed out like lanterns on the steadfast blue of Archie's look. Then a flush came over his face, and his eyelids, which were full and in many folds, went over these two lamps like curtains drawn. "Rowland, you cover me with shame," he said, in a voice only half audible, trembling in the air.

"What for ?" said Archie : as his countenance brightened, his tone went back more and more to that obnoxious Glasgow, which his father so disliked to hear. But though it was Glasgow, there was the very soul of music in Archie's voice. It became soft and round and dewy and liquid, with the qualities of all melting things in one. "What for ? when you want it so much, and me not at all. I have nothing to do with it ; and you——"

"I have a hundred things to do with it," cried Eddy, "if I could only tell you !—if you would only understand ! But you wouldn't—an honest fellow like you, that never had a thought you were ashamed of. Oh, yes, it's life or death, that is about what it is ! I could perhaps grapple on, and struggle out. Perhaps—I don't know if it would be enough—— Oh, I say, Rowland, it's too great a temptation. Put it away, back in your pocket. What does it matter what becomes of a wretched fellow like me !"

There was just enough reality in this struggle against himself to give to Eddy what was generally absent from his best endeavours—an air of truth. He did try to work himself up to the point of refusing this sudden windfall which had dropped into his very hand.

"Well," said Archie, "don't give it up for that. I have a

little more in the bank. It is not very much ; it's about fifty pounds more. My father gives me an allowance. It's a new thing for me to have all that money, and I just never spend it. What would I spend it upon here ? I got two of Rankin's little dogues—but they're paid for, the little dashed beasts that have taken to—somebody else—that don't care a button for me. Come, take it, lad : and if you'll come to my room when we get home, I'll give ye a cheque for the rest. If it was to buy anything, ye might demur, and say as well me as you ; but when it's to free you of something on your mind——"

"I should think it was on my mind," Eddy said, not looking up at the other face which beamed benignant upon him. Archie, perhaps, was never so much at ease with himself, so conscious of power and faculty, so flattered and gratified during his whole life.

"Well—and I have nothing on my mind," he said with a happy laugh. He doubled up the cheque and thrust it into Eddy's hand. "And just come to my room as soon as you get back—or perhaps—" He paused a little, wondering, as he had a favour to confer, which was the best way. "I'll tell ye what's the best. I'll come to yours, and then there will be no difficulty," Archie said.

He went down over the shoulder of the hill to Rosmore, never feeling for a moment the roughness of the way, laughing at himself as he stuck in a bog or stumbled over a rock, elated, happy, twice the man he was when he threaded slowly through the harsh bushes of the ling to where Eddy awaited him. What a half-hour that had been ! He had never been able to be of use to any one all his life. The experience was quite new to him, delightful above all words. He did not even remember for some time that it was Rosamond's brother whom he thus had it in his power to deliver from mysterious and unknown troubles. The first recollection of that additional inducement produced upon him indeed rather a sobering than an exciting effect. He divined instinctively that to Rosamond this would be a horror and humiliation. Heaven forbid she should ever know ! He felt nothing but delight in being able to do something for Eddy, but the thought of Rosamond covered him with sudden cold dews of alarm. Never, never must Rosamond know. She would blame him for it, Archie foresaw. It would raise a mountain of horrible obstacles between them. She would resent the mere possibility of such a link between her brother and himself. He must warn Eddy in the first place, who was so careless, who might let it out at any moment ; and in the next, he must take every precaution that no one should ever discover what had passed. Even his cheque might be compromising to Eddy ; there must be no way of betraying him, no possibility left. He turned over in his mind, as he hurried home, all the precautions that could be taken to conceal the transaction. Archie was not a man of business. He had

little knowledge of the ways of banks and the manner of passing money from one hand to another. But when the heart is concerned, the mind becomes ingenious. And he had thought it well out, and how it was to be done, so that whatever secrets might be revealed, nothing of this should ever come out against Eddy, before he had reached home.

Eddy himself was too much ashamed of the part he was playing to walk home with the young man who had thus come to his help. There was so much grace left in him that he could not do that. He made the excuse that he was going a little way up the loch to speak to Alick Chalmers, the universal agent, about something that was wanted for the decoration of the ball-room, and when Archie had left him he stood watching his progress over the hill till he was out of sight. He had been really touched by Archie's kindness, and by the absolute trust that young Rowland had showed in him, and something of compunction, something of unwonted tenderness, was in Eddy's eyes as he looked after that good Samaritan. "What a good fellow he is," he said to himself; "but, Jove! how badly he carries himself. To think he should treat a man like that whom he knows so little as he knows me; but I ought to have gone with him, for he'll be on his nose before he gets down to the road."

He could not but laugh at the manner in which Archie cannoneed off a big boulder and nearly rolled down the hill at one point in his progress. His heart was still touched, but yet to be as awkward as that, was what no man had any right to be. Then he threw himself down on the heather again and thought, steadily following out with puckered eyebrows and a set face the scheme which had sprung to being in his brain when he set his eyes on the cheque which now kept him warm against his bosom. How much fun and frolic there was in that bit of paper, if he could have used it for his own pleasure. It gleamed across him that he might yet use it for his own pleasure and let everything slide; but there are some things that are more necessary than pleasure even to the most sordid mind. He had hailed this money as a benediction from heaven when it first dropped so unexpectedly into his hands, to enable him perhaps to arrange his most pressing affairs and deliver himself from a galling presence. But by the time Eddy rose from his seat among the heather, the most lively feeling he felt in his mind was resignation, and a sense that he was giving up his personal wishes in the noble way of paying an old debt, when he might have got so much fun out of the money! It was a wonderful change of view.

He took his way to the upper end of the loch, but not to see Alick Chalmers. He went on for a mile or two on the crest of the hill, and then dropped down upon a little cluster of houses on a little knoll among the harvest fields where the scanty crop was only being gathered in in the end of October. Johnson came out of one of those houses as the young man approached.

"If you've anything particular to say, let us go up the hill," he said. "It ain't safe talking in these little holes. They can hear you in the other room, if not next door."

"What makes you think I have anything to say?"

"Well, there's those invitations you promised me," said Johnson.

"Promised you! I said I'd ask for you. I'll get them if you'll do what I want for me."

"Not a farthing more money, Master Eddy; it's no use speaking. To mention it even, would be as much as my place is worth."

"You fool! who's talking of money?" said Eddy.

They mounted up slowly till they came to a little green knoll, a sort of oasis in the waste of the heather.

"There's nobody can listen here," he said. "I've brought you a payment on account, Johnson. Look here, if you'll get him to take this, and wait for the rest till I can get it—"

"I daren't make such a proposal, Master Eddy; he'll have all or none—the whole sum, every penny—or he'll write and expose you."

"Hold your tongue, I say. Look at it first and see—it's as good as sovereigns counted out upon the table—it's not like a bill or that sort—"

"You don't suppose he'd take a bill off *you*?"

"You needn't be so dead sarcastic," said Eddy. "He's had many a worse fellow than me to deal with. Look here, Johnson, a hundred pounds down—or perhaps I could make it a hundred and fifty. It's a pity to refuse good money. If anything were to happen to me to-morrow; if you were to put some shot into me, for instance, on Friday on the moor—"

"Do you mean?" cried Johnson, his unwholesome white face lighting up with pleasure. "I can't do what you want, Mr. Eddy, for it don't depend upon me: but I'll never forget what you've done for me, man. It's the thing I've wished most."

"And do you think," said Eddy, "I'm going to do that for nothing? Not such a fool, my fine fellow. A hundred and fifty, Johnson—down; and as good as gold paid over the counter. Wire him that it's an offer, and that you'll be able to push business among the swells you will meet. I can introduce you to half the big-wigs about —, and if you don't make something out of them!—But I must have that confounded paper back."

"I don't wonder that you say so; but it's no use speaking. If I—it depended upon me! and, Master Eddy, if I can do you a good turn another time I will. You never can tell when you may want a good turn."

"I want this good turn—that confounded bit of paper, and a little ease of my life. Look here!—and there's more where that came from."

"I shouldn't wonder," said Johnson. He took the cheque out

of the young man's hands and examined it closely. "Yes," he said; "it's as good as gold. Lord, what a pity, when he was doing it, he didn't go a little bit farther and add a nought! Another nought, and just a little bit of change in one word. Bless us all, how easy he could have done it—a touch of the pen." Johnson put his hand on the cheque, pointing out lightly here and there where the improvement could have been made. "The one would be just as easy to him as the other," he said. "And think! then you would be set right in a moment; that bit of paper given up, and everything squared. When you have a friend like this, why can't you get him to do something that's of real use? A hundred's nothing; I would advise you to keep that for yourself. It might be of use to you for pocket-money. It's of no use to us."

"It's precisely a hundred pounds' worth of use," said Eddy.

"Ah! if you take it in that way; but *he* woul'n't take it in that way. He would say it's the tenth part of our claim, and I'm not going to let a young fellow like that (he would say—mind, it's not me) off for a tenth of our claim. How much more money (he would say) d'ye think we'd get out of him after he had his bit of paper back. No, no, Master Eddy, no use to try on that little dodge, he's far too old a bird. But, so far as I am concerned, if there's anything in a moderate way I could help you in, after what you're going to do for me—"

"How do you know I'll do it for you now? It's nothing for nothing in this world," said Eddy, fiercely. "If you don't help me, why should I take any trouble? Your day's shooting and your ball depend upon me, and I'm willing to see you through these and introduce you to all the big-wigs, but if I get nothing in return—"

"Only a word of advice," said Johnson. "Go back to your friend, Master Eddy, and get him to alter that thing there; he could do it with a scratch of his pen. Another nought, and there's nothing easier for a man, when it's his own writing, to change a word. If it looks blotchy, don't you know he puts his initials to show it's all right—I've seen it done a dozen times—that's all he's got to do, and everything would be square. Take it back to him, Master Eddy, that's my advice."

"I think you're the devil in person, Johnson," was what Eddy replied.

## CHAPTER XXIX

ON the evening of the same day Archie Rowland knocked at Eddy's door. It had been an evening of the lively order, which had now become habitual at Rosmore. Eddy and Marion had carried all before them. After a long discussion of the details of the ball, the decorations in which Eddy was collaborating with Mrs. Rowland, and fertile in a thousand suggestions,

Rosamond had again struck up a waltz on the piano, and the two gayest members of the party had immediately started off. There were present some of Miss Eliza's many nieces and nephews from the Burn, and in a few minutes two or three couples had "taken the floor," winding in and out of the furniture, with difficulties which increased the mirth. Mr. Rowland himself had come in from the dining-room while this lively scene was going on, and had looked upon it benignantly for a minute or two in the doorway, but had ended by going away, amused but perhaps a little bored by this unreasoning invasion of his quiet, as the father of a family not unfrequently does, not displeased that his children should enjoy themselves, but with an odd sense of bachelorhood and detachmen as he takes refuge in his library, supposing him to have one. Evelyn had been looking on too, still more benignant, glad that the youthful members of the party should be occupied anyhow, ready to take her place at the piano, and help them to keep it up, yet a little disturbed by the withdrawal of her husband, and instantly conscious, sympathetically, that the too-prominent and continual amusement of the young people had its disadvantageous side. Probably had she been their mother, she would have taken their part more warmly, and with a vague blame in her mind of the man who could not blot himself out as she did, for what pleased the children. Archie, to whom this evening, in the greater number of performers, Rosamond could not offer himself as a partner, felt like his father, a little annoyed and very much amazed with himself for feeling annoyed. How much better, he said to himself, to be like Saumarez, able to give himself up to what other people wished, to amuse them, and make the evening "go off" for the guests. Archie felt that he himself would never be up to that. He would never be able to forget himself and throw off all his cares, and sacrifice himself on the altar of his guests. A secret longing forced itself upon him to get rid of them all, to be quiet, even as in the dull evenings before the arrival of the visitors. The evenings had been very dull, but still— As for the old life in Glasgow, Archie somehow did not go back to that—it had retired so very far away out of his ken. If it had been thirty years ago instead of four months it could not have become more completely impossible, a thing got into the abyss of the past, not to be thought of any more.

It was late when he walked softly through the dim corridor up-stairs, in which one lamp only was burning low, making a sort of darkness visible. Everybody was asleep, or at least so it appeared from the absolute stillness of the house. He felt as if his step now and then coming upon a plank in the flooring which creaked, must startle the people retired in those silent rooms like the tread of a thief in the night. Nothing could be more unlike a thief than Archie was, stealing along in the dark to give away all he possessed in the world to a man whom he did

not by any means love, who was his neighbour only in the broadest sense of the word, one who wanted something which he possessed. He had made out all his generous foolish plans, as to how it could be best done, so that nobody need ever know that he had come to Eddy's aid, not even a banker's clerk. He knocked softly at the door from underneath which there was a glimmer of light, the only one in the long corridor where any sign of life was to be seen. His knock was not responded to for the first moment. He heard a little rustle and movement of paper, and then he knocked a second time, and again after a little interval Eddy came and opened the door.

"Oh, it's you, Rowland," he said, admitting him instantly.

Eddy had been sitting at a writing-table, with a number of papers before him, over which he had tossed a newspaper, the first thing that came handy, when he heard Archie's knock. There was no reason why he should have covered up his papers so. What he had been lost in contemplation of, was Archie's cheque, which was stretched out before him in his blotting-book, and which he was poring over with no doubt the grateful sensations which a man has when a friend holds out to him, when he is drowning, a helpful hand. He had been looking at it with his head on one side, and a look of earnest and fixed observation, sometimes making a visionary line with his pencil in the air, here and there. Perhaps a little regret about that nought that was wanting might be in his mind. Eddy was very hard pressed. The bit of paper which the money-lender had in his possession, which he held over the unfortunate young man's head, demanding a ransom as cruel and extravagant as any blood-money, was enough to ruin Eddy for ever and ever. No aid or succour from his friends would enable him to get over it, and he dared not on account of this examine the demand made upon him, or attempt to have it ratified. He must pay it, or he himself must sink to the very pit of social annihilation. Eddy was very well known to be a little *mauvais sujet*, as his father had been before him. Still that was a thing which society could ignore: it could even have permitted him to marry an heiress, with a sensation of pleasure in having him so well disposed of; but the bit of paper in the usurer's hand was a different matter. That was a thing which could not be admitted, and could not be forgotten. At all hazards, at all costs, that must be got rid of. If there only had been that other nought, if only a *t* had been prefixed to the *h* of the hundred, and sundry other unimportant alterations made! It was impossible not to think of this, not to see how easy it would have been, had Mr. Rowland been possessed by so good an idea. What a pity! what a pity! Eddy with all his thinking could not imagine a plan by which Rowland could be made to do that: and yet how easy it would be! He threw the Glasgow paper over it when he heard the knock at the door.

"Oh, is it you, Rowland? Come in. I was just looking at the—paper before I went to bed."

"It's little interest it can have for you—a Glasgow paper," said Archie with a smile. And then he said, "I've come to speak about what we were saying this afternoon on the hill."

"Yes?" said Eddy. He has repented already, he said to himself with a deep-drawn breath.

Archie stammered and hesitated, and blushed as he sat down at the table. He began to rustle and pluck at the corner of the paper unconsciously with those awkward fingers which he never knew what to do with. "I've been thinking," he said, and could get out no more.

"Look here," said Eddy nervously, "if you've been thinking, Rowland, as would be quite natural, that you were taken by surprise to-day on the hill, that you handed over that cheque to me in a moment of weakness, and that now on thinking it over you felt that you had been a fool, and that my troubles were no concern of yours—don't beat about the bush. I have been thinking just the same myself. It's monstrous you should be put out about a fellow's concerns whom you had never seen a month ago, and never may see again. Say it out, there's a good fellow; don't hesitate and spare my feelings. I agree beforehand in every word you say."

Archie stood open-mouthed while his companion delivered very rapidly this little oration, in which there was a great deal of genuine feeling: for Eddy thought it was almost inevitable that such a rash piece of generosity should be repented of, and yet was in so much mental excitement concerning the matter altogether, that his mind was full of impatient resentment against the man whose action (mentally) he approved, and whom he believed to be doing the most natural thing in the world.

"I suppose," said Archie, "it's the natural thing, because a man is a little behind in his company manners, and all that, and can't ride, or shoot, or dance, or anything as well as you, that you should make sure he is a cad all round, as you say."

"What do you mean?" cried Eddy, with his sharp eyes doing all he knew to read a face, to him altogether inscrutable in the simplicity of its single-mindedness.

"So long as you don't ask me to discuss what *you* mean," said Archie, with a careless disdain which stung the other: for, indeed, the lad was desperate in the feeling of being unable to get himself understood, whether from one side or another. "I've been thinking," he said, "the best way of getting that money without compromising—any person. It's a transaction between ourselves that nobody has anything to do with. My father might ask to see my bank book. I am perhaps doing him the same injustice that I think you are doing me: but he might, for my own good, if he thought I was spending too much. Now, I don't want him to poke into this, and find perhaps your name, or— Therefore I was thinking, suppose we go up to Glasgow, you and me? There's these things that you

want for the ball—that would be a very good excuse. And then I can draw out the money myself, in notes or gold, or whatever you please, which will leave no record on the books, so that I will be in it alone if there should be any remarks, and not you. Do you see? Here's the cheque for the other fifty pounds. You can have it that way if you like, of course ; but I can't help thinking it would be better my way."

"Rowland," said Eddy, giving him one glance, then withdrawing his eyes quickly, as from an inspection he could not bear ; "do you do all this for my sake?"

"I don't know that it's for any one's sake. It's just the easiest way—not to compromise any one. If I'm asked for an explanation, I can give it in my own way—about myself. But if I am asked for an explanation about you, I neither could give it, nor would I : you see the difference. It's just a plain business view."

"It is not a common kind of business," said Eddy ; "it's the first time I ever heard that sort of thing called business. You're a queer fellow, Rowland ; but I think you must be about the best fellow I ever knew."

"Nothing of the sort," said Archie. "I have something I don't want, and you want something you haven't got. We niffer, that's all. Oh, I suppose you don't understand that word, it's Scotch. We exchange, that's what it means."

"And what do I give in exchange?" said Eddy. The question was asked rather of himself than of Archie, who made no reply, except a little shame-faced laugh. Young Saumarez reflected a little, with working eyebrows and twitching mouth. He said at last, "I'll take you at your word, Rowland ; this will make it a debt of honour. I'll take you at your word. A thing that's got no evidence, that you couldn't recover, is the only thing that presses on a man's conscience. I'll take you at your word."

Archie again gave vent to a little laugh of embarrassment, and confused relief. He did not enter into the reasoning. Debts of honour, or debts of any kind, were unknown to him. It had driven him almost distracted to think how he was to pay for the two little puppies from Rankin—the doggies which he always thought of with a little bitterness, who had abandoned him and gone over to the enemy. No more than Eddy could have understood that difficulty, could Archie understand how it might be supposed he was securing himself against loss by astutely giving the character of a debt of honour to the money he was bestowing upon his fellow-creature who was in need. He said simply, "We will consider this as settled then ; and we'll run up to Glasgow to-morrow. I can show you the place : it is not like London, perhaps ; but there's things in it you couldn't see in London. There's a boat about ten o'clock."

"Oh, I say ! that means getting up in the middle of the night."

"Well, there's one at twelve. We'll get there before the bank shuts. You'll not be able to see so much of the town."

"I can live without that," said Eddy.

"Well, Glasgow's a very fine place," said Archie gravely, not wishing to permit any disparagement of his native town : and then he rose from the table. He had already unconsciously pulled the newspaper half away, and as he rose up his movement displayed it altogether, and he could not help seeing, notwithstanding Eddy's eager half-movement to cover it again, the cheque lying opened out upon the blotting-book underneath. He said hastily, " You were just going to send it away—"

"Yes," said Eddy, his heart beating, not understanding the question, but seizing at it as he would have done at any means of escape.

"Then I just came in time," said Archie, with a pleased smile.

Eddy took up the cheque, with a feeling of despair clutching at his heart. " You had better have it back," he said.

" You can bring it up with you," said Archie ; " nobody is likely to ripe your pockets and see what's in them in the middle of the night."

With this enigmatical speech, which Eddy did not in the least understand, Rowland bade him a hurried good-night, and took himself away.

Ripe his pockets : what did that mean ? but this problem did not occupy much of the precious time which Eddy had to give up to thinking. He found the pencil lying where he had left it, the cabalistic pencil which he had been waving over Archie's cheque, hoping perhaps to convey thus into it the alterations which James Rowland could have made so easily, which would have cost that millionaire so little, and done Eddy such a world of advantage. A malison on all millionaires ! What they might do with a sweep of the pen, without ever feeling it, without knowing that a crumb had fallen off their well-covered tables for a dog to eat ! Eddy flung the pencil from him in his indignation. The fellow meant very well, he allowed that. There was advantage in keeping this little transaction quite dark, in obliterating all traces of the loan or gift given him in this way. But, confound the fellow, all the same ! Eddy flung his pencil out of his hand, and it fell on the floor at the foot of the table where Archie had been sitting. The dumb articles that one throws away generally have a prompt revenge over us in having to be groped after next minute ; and this was what happened to Eddy. But as he stooped to pick it up, his heart began to beat with a wild commotion which almost choked him : for there at the foot of the table, underneath the chair which Archie had pushed away, lay a long booklet in a green paper cover. There could be no doubt to the most ignorant what it was. It was Archie's cheque-book, which he had brought in, in case Eddy should, after all, have preferred his money that way, with a cheque written out for Archie's spare fifty pounds on the first page, and a dozen more blank cheques behind. The

blood mounted up to Eddy's face. It came in such a rush that he could scarcely see for the moment; and yet he knew very well what it was, and the inconceivable opportunity which the devil—was it the devil, or that something not always benevolent which people call providence?—had put into his hand.

He scarcely went to bed at all that night. Hosts, armies, legions of thoughts came up and possessed him like an invaded country, marching and counter-marching through his mind. It was not without a struggle that he yielded, it was not without many struggles. Half-a-dozen times at least he was the victor, and rejected conclusively, triumphantly, the idea set before him; and then the landscape would change, the perspective alter, and regrets, doubts, convictions that wrong was right, specious arguments to show how entirely it had always been so, would rise up and bring back the rushing tide of battle. And then there were things he had to do. He went to bed only when the morning gray had come up over the little town on the other side of the loch, bringing it out of the darkness with a curious furtive aspect, stealing into the light as if it had been lying in wait for this moment, which indeed was quite true. He tossed himself on his bed, and courted sleep ineffectually for half an hour, but after that time it came with all the force of a despot. He slept, as men or boys sleep only at twenty, till the day was bright all over the loch. At twenty! oh heavens, was that all the age he was, that haggard little gray face waking up and remembering in the great pale shining of the light.

He went into Archie's room on his way down-stairs and put back the cheque-book which he had found. Archie had breakfasted an hour before, and explained to the family that he was going to Glasgow by the mid-day boat, and Saumarez with him, to see after those things for the ball.

"You seem to be getting great friends with Eddy," Mrs. Rowland said in the pause which followed this speech. The words were simple enough, but they went with a wave of interest round the table.

"Well, no harm, Evelyn, no harm," said Rowland, pleased that his boy was making friends in what the poor man in his heart called "our own position."

Marion put on a little conscious look, blushed a little and smiled a little, as if she knew the private cause of this friendship—while Rosamond opened a little wider her steady eyes, and turned them with an inquiry upon Archie. He did not shrink from the attention thus attracted towards him: his heart was soft to Eddy, to whom he was about to do so great a service. It is a wonderfully softening process to be very good to any one, and makes us think better of the objects of our kindness. Eddy had become more interesting to Archie than he had ever thought it possible he would find him; and this not for any one's sake, not even for Rosamond's, but for his own. The only effect, curiously enough, of this incident, was to deepen his dislike to

his stepmother. She was the one to question and object, he thought. Perhaps she thought him not good enough for Eddy—most likely, as Eddy was of her own kind. Eddy, though so late that the party had all dispersed from the table, except Mrs. Rowland herself, who was reading her letters, and Marion, who was making pretence of looking over the fashion papers in order to wait for his appearance, was in great spirits and full of the expedition he was about to make.

"Rowland is going to show me everything," he said. He made a very bad breakfast, eating nothing, but he was full of talk and apparent enjoyment, and begged the ladies to give him commissions. "Archie may forget, but I will not forget." He insisted that Marion and his sister should walk down to the pier to see them off.

"Come along, Rose," he called to her as they all came out on the colonnade, "don't you see I am going out sight-seeing? I am a British tourist. I am not sure that I am not a Tripper—and Rowland is taking care of me. Come and see me safe into the boat." He continued in an extremely cheerful condition all the way to the ferry, keeping up a fire of banter.

"The laddie's fey, I think," said old Saunders on the pier, who resented too much liberty.

"And, Eddy, I don't think you are well. I think you are feverish," said Rosamond.

"You don't say those sisterly things," said Eddy to Marion.

"Oh," cried the girl, "I just never mind. What would I do if I were to make myself uneasy about everything? It is time enough when there is any occasion. And Archie would never mind what I said."

"But I should mind always," said Eddy, lowering his voice.

"You! but you would not like me to ask you if you were feverish."

"I should tell you I was always feverish—with rage, when I saw you wasting your attention listening to fellows like that nephew. It is that that has made my head ache," cried Eddy. "I thirst for his blood."

"He has never done you any harm," said Marion demurely.

"Thank heaven no one is coming to-night. I shall have you all to myself to-night. There will be no nephews about. I shall make Archie take me to where you used to live."

"Oh, you wouldn't like that at all," said Marion. "It's not a place to see. We were put there when we were little children, when it didn't matter where we lived. Don't go to any such place. There's nothing to see."

"There would always be some trace of you," said Eddy, making great use of his eyes. And then they both burst into a laugh.

"You're so silly that one doesn't know how to speak to you," said Marion, "but for all that don't go there."

Rosamond walked along with her long tread in stately serious-

ness after them. She said, "You are very kind to take Eddy in hand. He wants so much to be steadied, and get a little solidity. I would much rather have him with you than with more——" She paused a moment, and looked her companion over with her steady gaze.

"How? You mean better company," he said.

"No, I don't mean that. I mean——people in the world: he is so much better out of the world, and seeing nobody he ever knew before."

"Among the natives," said Archie with a laugh.

Rosamond did not contradict him or look as if he had made any mistake. She said with a sigh, "Eddy wants a great deal of looking after. I wish I could find some one to pay a little attention to him. He will be good for a few days, and then he will go all wrong, as if he had never pulled up before." She sighed, and added, "Keep him safe for me to-day. Don't let him go and roam about spending money."

"I will do my best."

"Are you a man that spends money yourself, Mr. Rowland? People don't do that in Scotland, do they? They are different."

"They cannot do that," said Archie, with a laugh, "when they have nothing in their pockets to spend."

"I beg your pardon. I thought you had quantities of money," Rosamond said.

### CHAPTER XXX

THERE was not very much conversation between the two young men as they went to Glasgow. Eddy, indeed, would talk for a few minutes from time to time in his usual way, but presently would fall into silence, from which he roused up feverishly with suppressed excitement in his eyes, to rattle on once more for a brief time, asking hasty and often absurd questions, and making fun of the answers which Archie in puzzled seriousness made. Humour had not much share in Archie's constitution. He had been light-hearted enough in his earlier development, and joked like the rest in the rather noisy fun of the class to which he belonged; but his father's return, and the revolution that had taken place in his existence, had taken all the fun out of Archie, and made life very serious to him. Eddy's "chaff," the light art of turning everything into ridicule, which, when there is no sympathetic ear to hear, falls so flat and sounds so dreary, perplexed his graver companion. Archie concluded charitably and not untruly that it was excitement that produced this varying behaviour, the dead silence and the chatter of speech. He believed that Eddy's troubles about money and the relief he was himself about to bring to them were the cause. He himself thought that a hundred and fifty pounds was an

immense sum, and that there was scarcely any embarrassment possible to a youth of his own age which could not be amply covered by that. Archie had known "fellows in debt" often enough, but a ten-pound note, or twenty at the outside, would have made their hearts dance. And he thought, with a sense that he himself was acting the part of providence, that a complete and perfect deliverance must result in this case. He said to himself, that when Eddy had actually the money in his hands—which he intended to draw out himself and hand over in notes to his companion—his mind would be more calm.

The transaction at the bank was managed quite satisfactorily. Archie would not even permit Eddy to accompany him inside, but left him gazing vacantly into the shop-windows while he accomplished his business. Very little passed between them when it was completed. Archie thrust the little packet of notes into Eddy's hand. "They're small ones," he said, "I thought that was best." And Eddy grasped Archie's hand and gave him a look in which gratitude was blended with what Archie imagined to be joy—in his salvation, so to speak: but which was in reality a delightful consciousness of the possession of money, and of the great joke involved in his benefactor's conviction that he was doing a great thing. Eddy did not think so much of the hundred and fifty pounds. He concluded that it was the merest trifle to the millionaire's son, who, of course, had only got to ask his father for more if he wanted it. Eddy put it into his pocket carelessly, though with much pleasure. It did not mean the payment of debt, which to him was but a mediocre satisfaction; it meant various things much more agreeable—the spending of money, which is an inexhaustible pleasure so long as the wherewithal lasts.

After this they went to see various of the sights of Glasgow, in which Eddy, it must be allowed, was not very much interested—the Cathedral, for one, which Archie looked upon as the most glorious building in the world, but which young Saumarez cared about as little for as he would have cared for any other cathedral under the sun. Eddy yawned as he walked about the aisles and investigated the crypt. He cared neither for the architecture nor the antiquity, nor for the painted glass, nor even for Rob Roy, which latter interest poor Archie considered infallible. Nor were the other sights more exciting to him. He suggested luncheon as far more interesting either than the Necropolis, the College, or the Broomielaw: and after the luncheon, which he did not consider highly satisfactory, asked with much languor and fatigue of expression, whether Rowland had not some one he wanted to call on instead of bothering about any more Glasgow sights?

Archie coloured high at this question, not on Eddy's account, but with a curious feeling of shame, which was also a feeling of guilt. To be in Glasgow without going to see his aunt would be, he was aware, an unpardonable and heartless thing. It

would wound her deeply if she knew, and even if she never knew, it would be no less a mean and abominable thing to do. Nevertheless the presence of Eddy had been enough to make him put this from his mind as an impossibility. "I was not thinking of calling anywhere," he said.

"But you must have people that you want to see. Let's go and see somebody," Eddy said. "I like people. I'm not a fellow for seeing sights."

"I might take you to see the football at the Westpark—if you are fond of football."

"Oh, I don't mind it," said Eddy; "let's go and see the football. It is better than staring at things neither you nor I care about."

"Oh, I care about that," said Archie: and as he thought of the old field in which his old companions used to meet, a certain warmth for the old times came over his heart. He had been rather a fine performer at football in his day, and the Westpark men had meant to play the College that very season, he recollects. He had not appeared at the field since the season began. His place there knew him no more. Nevertheless, to see them at their practice would be something, and he might meet some of the fellows between whom and himself there was now such a gulf fixed. Saumarez would be startled no doubt by their noisy ways, and their broad Scotch: but what did it matter after all what Saumarez thought? They went accordingly to the Westpark, where, with pleasure but alarm, he had conducted his father four months ago, when cricket was going on. Happy lads! they had but changed from cricket into football, while Archie—what changes, what changes his life had undergone!

They got to the field before the play had begun, and Archie was loudly welcomed by several of his old friends. "What's come of ye, man, all this time?" "Eh, Archie! you're a sight for sair een." "Are ye back in Glaskie, or are ye just on a visit?" Archie shook hands with a whole band, and replied that he was only up for the day, but that he felt he must come and see them, and hear what was going on; and he had a friend with him—a friend from England. The young athletes clustered round, delighted to see any friend of Archie's. They asked Eddy questions about the game "in the South." "But I don't know much about the South," he said. "Harrow's the farthest South I know." Archie's friends, though they were but Glasgow lads, knew enough to know that Harrow merited respectful treatment, and they led the stranger to the best place to see the game which was just beginning. The two young men stood and watched with great interest for some time, and then in this new springing of kindly associations, Archie felt it was impossible to go back without seeing his aunt. To come here and not to go to Aunt Jean, to run the risk of wounding her to the heart: for some one would be sure to tell her he had been seen at Westpark—he felt that it was impossible he should do this thing. He touched Eddy on the shoulder at the very crisis of

the interest, and whispered, "I'm going to run away for ten minutes to see an old friend. I'll come back for you here."

"Not a bit," said Eddy, promptly. "I'll go with you. My interest is not overwhelming in the match. I'd much rather go—"

"Oh, it is not a place you will care for," said Archie, much embarrassed.

"Never mind : I'll come with you," said his companion, and what could Archie say ? He made a hurried explanation to one of the performers that he was compelled to go, and the two left the field. Even then Archie made another attempt to throw off this too close companion.

"It's a pity," he said, "to take you away. I'm not going to see anybody that's interesting. It is an old body, an old—relation ; nothing that will please you."

"You don't do me justice," said Eddy. "I tell you people are what I care for ; and you know my taste for ladies. Old ladies are my favourite study—when there are no young ones in the way."

"There are no young ones," said Archie, in despair ; "and I don't want to take you away."

"Oh, I like it," said Eddy, and thrust his hand through the other's arm.

There was, therefore, nothing to be done but to accept the leading of fate. How strange and wonderful now were all these familiar ways that led to the Sauchiehall Road ! Already the work of time and change had operated upon them. They were narrow, and mean, and gray, not comfortable and friendly as they had once looked. The houses small and poor, the streets confined and filthy, the whole complexion of the place altered. He had not known what a homely, poor part of the town it was : he saw it now as if it were a new place with which he was making acquaintance for the first time.

And when he came in sight of the house in Sauchiehall Road, the familiar house with its front door, so dignified a feature, and the big elderberry tree filling up the little space before the door ! The blinds were drawn carefully half over the window, except in the little parlour down-stairs, where everything was open, the little muslin curtain over the lower part of the window tucked up that Mrs. Brown might see—who was sitting there at her knitting, carefully looking out upon the street, for something new. What a changed life it was for Mrs. Brown ; no young people running out and in, no merry companions, no little vanities to minister to, no little quarrels and frettings, but a dead load of solitary comfort, good things which she ate alone, and new dresses which nobody saw. She gave "a skreigh," as she herself would have said, as she saw Archie coming up the path, and flew herself to open the door for him. "Eh, my bonnie man !" cried Mrs. Brown. She did not fling herself on his neck and kiss him, for that was not according to

her reserved Scotch ways, but she held both his hands, and swayed him slightly by them, gazing into his face with eyes full of ecstasy and tears. "Eh, Archie, but it's a pleasure to see ye. Eh, my bonnie man!"

"I am glad to see you again, Aunty Jean," said Archie. "I was in Glasgow for the day, and I've come to see you; and I've got a friend with me—a friend from England."

"Oh," said Mrs. Brown, perceiving Eddy's not very distinguished figure behind. She made him something between a curtsey and a bow. "I am sure," she said, "any friend of Archie's is welcome to me, sir. Come in and take a seat. I'm glad to see ye.—But oh, Archie, my man! the sight of my own laddie is just light to my een. And how is a' wi' you, my bonnie boy?—and Mey? And are ye getting on well at Rosmore? And is your father well? and the leddy? I have so many questions to ask I dinna know when to stop. Eh, Archie, how I have missed you—life itself is not the same—and Mey! I just sit dowie all the day, and care for nothing, looking out at my window as if I might see ye pass, and sitting by the fireside and listening as if I might hear ye coming down the stair. Eh, but life's a different thing when there's naething but an old wife sitting her lane by her fireside—"

And here Mrs. Brown broke down and cried; but looking up smiling, in the midst of her tears, bade them to tell her if they had got their dinner, or what she could give them. "I will have mince-collops ready in a moment," she said.

"I told Rowland so," said Eddy, "that he should have come and asked you for some dinner instead of going to that queer place in—what do you call the street? but he thought it would be giving you too much trouble. That's the worst of that modest sort of dreadfully proud fellow. He can't be got to see that you would like to take the trouble—for him."

"Eh, laddie," cried Mrs. Brown, her face lighting up through the half-dried tears; "are ye a warlock, or how do ye ken? That's just heaven's truth; and though he's blate, he's awfu' proud: and ye must be a lad of uncommon sense to ken."

"Yes," said Eddy, modestly, "I've always been noted for my sense; but I am not at all proud, and I think if you were to make some of your nice tea for us—I am quite sure that you make delightful tea."

"Hear to him!" said Mrs. Brown, delighted. "Ye shall have your tea, my young gentleman, and a pleasure it will be to serve ye. I will just ask Bell if the kettle is boiling; and, Archie, ye can show your friend the pictures of Mey and you when you were bairns, and the views your father sent home from India, and anything you can find to amuse him. I'll no be a minute." She left the two young men alone together while she hurried to the kitchen to see after the tea.

"Let me see the picture of your sister and you, not the views from India, Rowland," said Eddy.

"Saumarez," cried Archie, clearing his throat ; "I told you this was a relation. She brought us up, and she was very kind to us. I can't have her laughed at, you know."

"Laughed at?" cried Eddy ; "how you misunderstand ! I found out all that in the twinkling of an eye. And as for being disrespectful to your aunt, it is not I that will ever be disrespectful ; besides which, I delight in an old lady like that—was the kettle boiling, Mrs. Brown ?"

"Deed it was," said Mrs. Brown, "and Bell will bring the tea ben in a minute or two, as soon as it has had time to mask. I never let it stand long after I have maskit the tea. And how are ye getting on, Archie, my bonnie lad, at Rosmore ? Are ye getting more familiar ? are ye liking it better ? And Mey ? Ye are such poor letter writers, I must take my chance of hearing all I can when you're at hand. Four months, Archie, and neither the one nor the ither of you has been near. That's no what you ought to have done. You that were just like bairns of my ain."

"It is not my fault, aunty. We have not been in Glasgow since we left. There has been always something to do. Either my father has wanted me, or May has been busy, or something has been in the way. We have had people visiting in the house." Archie looked instinctively at Eddy to help him out.

"We have been there for a long time," said Eddy. "People very hard to keep amused, always making claims upon them. Of course we had not the pleasure of knowing you, dear Mrs. Brown ; and we have been the greatest bother——"

"Oh, dinna say so," cried Aunt Jean ; "sure am I they were very glad of the bother, and real pleased to have ye there. And so am I delighted that Archie should have such a friend as you. No, I'm not so unreasonable. I was giving a bit jeer at them to see what they would say for themselves, and what excuse they would give. But I was wanting no excuse. I'm just overjoyed that they have such friends. And if they werena coming about me every day, well I kent the reason. I would rather see them doing their duty in their father's house, and taking their proper place, than fiddling and fyking about me."

"We've been neglectful, Aunt Jean," said Archie, "but we'll do better after this." The sense that he had been good to one, in one direction, made his heart all the softer in every way. "It's all been so new, and there is so much to learn ; but it will never happen again."

"Na, na, ye must not take me in earnest like that," said Jean. "I gie a girn, but—I've no evil meaning. And here's the tea. Just draw in your chair and come near the table, Mr.—but I didn't rightly catch your name."

"Most people call me Eddy," said the young man with a laugh.

"And a very good name too. You'll be from the south ? though I have kent many Adies in our ain country. But ye have a

grand way of speaking, and I hope, Archie, ye'll take an example. I'm no fond of knapping English, but it's a' the fashion, and mair does it than has ony right."

"I will just speak as I was born to speak," said Archie, with a taste of his native obstinacy.

"Weel, weel, it's no for me to interfere. But ye havena said a word about Mey? She might have come with ye, to look in upon her auld aunt. But it was aye oot of sight oot of mind with Mey. Ye are mair faithful, Archie. Have you heard of the great changes in the Road?" (Mrs. Brown said Rod.) "Lizzie White, that was once out and in of the house every day, she is married upon Mr. Wright, a watchmaker in Buchanan Street—just a very excellent match. Oh yes, ye must mind very well, for I used to think that if ye wasna both so young— And then the Cowcaddens, that made just a great show, with cabs at their door every day, and pairties and dancing and I dinna ken all what—has failed, poor man, and the house roupit, and them living in some poor close somewhere, just as miserable as they can be, which shows what prideful wasting and high living must come to. And oh, Archie, there is another thing I just want to speak to you about. You mind Colin Jamieson that was at the College, and meaning to be a minister—poor lad! he's fallen into a dwining and an ill way, and they say he maun go to Egypt or some of thae places. And his folk are poor folk, and he just smiles and says 'they might as well tell me to gang to the moon.' Archie, I had the pen in my hand yesterday to write you a letter. Eh, laddie, ye aye had an open hand. If ye would maybe spare out of your abundance a little siller to help this poor lad! He would never ask it, but from an auld comrade that was so well off, there could be nae reason for refusing. Archie, if your heart were to speak."

There was a dead pause, and it seemed to poor Archie that heaven was against him. He who would have been so ready, so anxious to offer anything he had—and he had nothing! He could not speak; and that this demand should have been made before Eddy made it more dreadful still. But Eddy did not take it in that point of view. He was not called upon to say anything. He sat calmly eating the cake with which Mrs. Brown had supplied him. Eddy was not embarrassed at all; he was much interested in a half-comic way to know how Rowland would get out of it. To a fellow like that it would be hard to refuse, and Eddy felt that it was a very good thing he had got all the money, or else to a certainty the fool would have given it to this other man, who probably would do much better to stay at home. He ate his cake, therefore, and drank his tea with an amused and interested mind, looking on with a perfectly tranquil perception of all that was involved.

"Aunt Jean," said Archie, stammering and blushing, "I am more sorry than words can say—but I have not got the money. I would give it—or my heart's blood if I could—to an old friend

like Colin. But I haven't it. I haven't it! If it would do at the New Year—

"He will likely be in his grave by the New Year," said Mrs. Brown, "if he canna get away." Jean had drawn herself within herself, so to speak. She rose a head taller as she sat, over her tea-tray, her portly person seemed to draw in, the beaming expression departed from her face. To be refused! and by her own boy! and before a stranger! and with a lee! for how could he be without money? He that had got a twenty-pound note, as she herself knew, only four months before, just a fortune for a callant like Archie; besides more no doubt where that caine from, Jims Rowland being just too liberal. It was to Mrs. Brown as if all the waves of the Clyde had dashed into her face. For a moment she could make no reply.

"Archie," she said at last solemnly, "I'm no fond of much stroke about money between friends. It's very likely to lead to ill-blood. But I thought for Colin, that ye once were so fond of, if I might speak—you have maybe," she said with keen irony, "forgotten who he was. I've often seen that folk have but short memories that rise in the world. He's the lad who got you into your grand club. Ye may not think much of it now, but it was a grand thing for ye then. It was him ye used to consult about your debating and all that, and that was sae good at the footba', and that learnt ye—"

"Do you think I have forgotten, auntie? I have forgotten nothing," cried Archie, starting up from the table. "It's just despair," he said, under his breath. "I havena got it. I havena got it!" He began to pace about the room as his father did, with his hands thrust into the depths of his empty pockets, and his shoulders up to his ears. As for Eddy, he turned aside a little and took up the paper Mrs. Brown had been reading, by way of relieving them of the embarrassment of his presence as much as possible during this family dispute.

"Well!" said Mrs. Brown, "it is the first time I have askit anything of ye, and it will be the last time, Archie Rowland. Let's say no more about it. I thought it was just a thing ye would have made no hesitation about, but been mair ready to give than me to ask."

"And so I would," he cried, "and so I would!" with a sort of groan out of his very heart.

"We will just say no more about it," said Mrs. Brown, with dignity. "Sit down and take your tea."

"I am wanting no tea," said Archie.

"Ye will sit down and bide quiet at any rate, and not disturb other folk. Mr. Adie, I am very glad that ye like your tea; it's aye a good sign in a young man if he likes his tea. It shows he's no thinking of ither beverages that are mair to the taste of so many unfortunate lads in this world. Yell maybe be from London, which is a muckle place, I have always heard, and full o' temptation. Eh, laddies, but ye should be awfu' careful not

to put yourselves into temptation. A very little thing will do it. Ye will maybe think," said Mrs. Brown, making a desperate attempt to fathom the cause of Archie's behaviour, and explain its enormity, "that to take an interest in racing horses or even in playin' cards or dice or the like of that, is no just a cardinal crime. But oh, it leads to a' the rest ! Ye will maybe think nothing of losing a shilling or twa, or even a pound or twa upon a game. That's bad enough, oh, it's bad enough ! It may keep ye from doing a good turn to a neighbour in time of need, it may make ye powerless for good, just as it makes ye an instrument for evil ; but that's not all. It leads from bad to worse. It's like the daughter o' the horse-leech, it's aye crying 'Give, give.' It's like a whummel down a hill, the longer ye go the faster ye go. Oh, laddies ! when I think how young ye are, and a' the dangers in your way, and what soft hearts some of ye had, and how soon they harden when ye think of nothing but yourself——"

"Aunty," said Archie, "we have got the train to catch, and the boat to catch, and we will have to go."

"I will not detain ye, Archie," said Mrs. Brown, with the air of a duchess, "so long as ye give Mr. Adie the time to finish his tea. Good morning to you, sir, and I am very glad to have seen ye in my poor bit place. Ye will maybe give my love to my niece, Mey. And good-bye to ye, Archie. I hope that everything good will be aye in your path, and that ye may never want a kind friend nor one to succour ye in time of need."

To tell the feelings with which Archie heard the door of his childhood shut upon him with a decisive clash, as if for ever, is more than I have words or power to do. He was shamed, abandoned, given up—and without any fault of his. Eddy was extremely entertaining all the way home. He had of course too much good taste and good breeding to refer in any way to the family quarrel of which he had been so unlucky as to be the witness. To ignore it altogether and do his best to divert his companion's mind, and make him forget, was of course the thing which in the circumstances a man of good feeling would do.

## CHAPTER XXXI

THERE was great curiosity at Rosmore to hear what the young men had done and what they had seen in Glasgow : in the chief place, no doubt on account of the decorations for the ball, which were of so much importance, and in which Eddy's taste was expected to accomplish such great things. Eddy had so much to say on this point, that the brief interval in the drawing-room before dinner was wholly taken up with his account of his arrangements and purchases.

"If it all succeeds as I expect," said Eddy, "I know what I

shall do, Mr. Rowland. It will make a revolution in my life. I will follow the example of other *jets de famille* and set myself up as a decorator, don't you know. Algy Fergusson makes heaps of money by it. When you are going to give a ball, he takes everything in hand, charges you a certain sum, and supplies whatever you want, from the flowers on the stairs to a few dancing men in the best society, if that is wanted. I shall follow him in humble imitation. No, I'm not going to tell you too much. Mrs. Rowland has given me *carte blanche*. Wait till you see."

"It's a queer trade," said Rowland; "but something might be made of it. I would advise you, however, Eddy, to look out for something more like a man."

"Oh, it is very like my kind of man," said Eddy; "not yours, sir: but there's not very much of me."

Rowland, like everybody else, had learned to call young Saumarez, according to the fashion of the day, by his *petit nom*. And he laughed with great good humour at this self-description. The young man was the most entertaining study of what he considered the manners of the best society to the master of Rosmore. Eddy's lightness and ease and imperturbability amused him more than he could say, and at the same time filled him with respect. It was all the more evident in comparison with Archie's easily roused temper and irritable self-consciousness, which saw in everything a shadow of blame, and never was at ease, or able to take anything lightly. Rowland watched the effect upon his son of intercourse with the other light-hearted lad with the greatest secret anxiety. He thought with pleasure that Eddy had "taken to" his uncultured uneasy boy, and that Archie would "learn manners" from contact with the other youth, who, though so little to look at, not such a nice-looking fellow as Archie, was yet so much more a man of the world. Eddy's cheerful admission of his own defects, and that there was not very much of him, delighted Rowland. How it disarmed criticism! Would Archie, he wondered, ever attain to that easy mind, and unembarrassed faculty of taking the sting out of any jibe by tranquil pre-assertion of his own deficiencies? It was not a thing which Mr. Rowland could himself have attained, but he saw its advantages. It did not seem, however, in the meantime that Archie had made much progress in acquiring this gift. He took little part in the conversation which young Saumarez kept up so lightly. It was Eddy who told the story of their day in Glasgow, and owned to have yawned in the Cathedral. Archie was silent, as was his wont. He kept a little apart, and said nothing. Sometimes he cast a glance of strange meaning at the lively conversationalist, who made their expedition sound so amusing. What was it that look meant? It was Archie's usual way—his inability to understand the happier natures. They all noted that occasional glance, and all gave the same interpretation to

it: for what, indeed, could it mean else? There was nothing else to arouse his surprise, the wondering, half-question in his eyes.

Archie's wonder, indeed, was beyond words. To think that, with such a light heart, the transaction which had already cost himself so much should be taken by the other without a thought of the penalty involved, or the shame it had already brought. Perhaps Eddy did not realize that shame, or what it was to the young man to be suspected of unkindness, of selfishness, of wasting upon miserable pursuits of his own the money that might have saved the life of another. A year ago nothing could have made Archie himself realize such a position, for he had never possessed money, and could not in the nature of things have been asked for it, and this probably was why Saumarez was so obtuse. There was another thing, however, which Archie could not understand, but which he was deeply grateful for: and that was that Eddy made not the slightest reference, in his lively narrative of the day's proceedings, to the visit to Mrs. Brown. Why? But Archie could not tell—it only vaguely increased the trouble in his mind, while more or less soothing it externally: and he did not know whether it was not his duty to mention it himself. They might think him ashamed of Aunt Jean if he said nothing, and yet the recollection of that visit was so painful that he preferred not to speak of it, and was grateful to his companion for leaving it out of his easy and amusing tale. After dinner Eddy was as much the hero of the moment as he had been before. He had various experiments to make as to the lights, as to the flowers, and all the details of the ball-room, for the due regulation of which the group of admiring spectators followed him up and down, hanging upon his words. Archie followed at the end of the train, still wondering, saying to himself, that no doubt the money, which apparently was to cost himself so dear, had so relieved Eddy's mind that he could not restrain himself, that he felt a new man: that was no doubt the cause of his vivacity, the lightness of his heart. Archie remembered how he had himself felt when relieved of the burden of the debt to Rankin for the little dogs, and other small matters which had been on his mind before he had received his father's first gift of twenty pounds. That gift had come to him amid painful circumstances, but when the first effect produced by them had died away, how glad he had been to have it, to clear himself from the small burdens which were as lead upon his soul! Eddy was much more a man of the world than he, and his liabilities were far greater, but he thought he could understand how he must feel from those sensations of his own. He could not but think, however, that in Eddy's place he would have said something—he would have given a look or a grasp of the hand to his benefactor to show him that he appreciated and felt what he had done, especially if that benefactor had been likely to get into

trouble for it. Then Archie, pondering behind backs, while all that lively chatter was going on, remembered himself that he had not said a word of gratitude to his father for the twenty pounds, had neither felt nor spoken any gratitude. Ah, but I am not his father, Archie said to himself. With this thought, however, came another reflection, that up to this moment he had never shown any thankfulness to his father, who had bestowed so many gifts upon him. He had been embarrassed and awkward, and had taken everything for granted. Who was he to blame another for the same sentiment which was so strong in himself? Only just I am not his father, Archie said.

It was when the party was breaking up for the night that Marion seized upon her brother, drawing him into a corner of the hall where the lights were extinguished, and where in the recess of a window there was a sheltered place beyond the reach of observation. She caught him by the arm and drew him aside there, until the others had dispersed, and then a piece of inquiry which he had not anticipated burst upon Archie. "Were you at Aunty Jean's? Did you take him to Aunty Jean's?" Marion exclaimed breathlessly, holding his arm with her hands as if in a vice.

"You heard him," said Archie, avoiding the question, "telling all where we had been."

"Were you not there? Did you not go there? He never said a word, but he could not speak if you didn't. Archie, tell me on your word—were you not there?"

Archie saw that her eyes were gleaming, and her face pale. He did not know what to make of this sudden assault, nor what it could matter to Marion whether he had or had not gone to see Aunty Jean. He answered at last, however, with reluctance.

"Yes, we were there."

"You were there! you took him there!" cried the girl, her eyes in the dark shooting out sparks of fire. She seized him again by the arm and shook him violently. "Oh, I knew you would do it! What do you care for keeping up our name! If it had been anybody else you might have done what you pleased—but him!"

"Why him?" said Archie; "what is he? Do you think I could neglect an old friend, not to speak of my nearest kin, and her that brought us up—"

"Oh, what's in that?—brought us up! She was well paid for it," cried Marion, "and now established for her life, and everything provided, because papa thinks she was kind to us."

"She was very kind."

"She was not unkind," said Marion. "She just made us serve her purpose and keep her in an easy life. If she had been unkind it would have been the same as killing the goose that laid the golden eggs. And now you've exposed us, and showed just what we were, and where we came from, to Eddy Saumarez! Oh, Archie, man! could you not have said she was

an old nurse, or something like that? and then there could have been no objection. I would have had my wits about me if I had been in such an emergency. You might so easy have said she was our old nurse; but that's what you could never do, to take thought for our credit and not to expose us."

"I don't know what you mean by exposing us," said Archie indignantly, "and as for disowning our Aunt Jean—"

"Oh, disowning is just a grand word! I mean nothing of the kind. I could just be as fond of aunty in private as you. And what could she expect more? It would show she was self-seeking and full of her own pride if she wanted us to expose ourselves for her. What does that mean? It just means that we have our position to keep up. We belong to the upper classes and not to Sauchiehall Road. I would not have let the like of Eddy Saumarez know that we had any connection with Sauchiehall Road, except with an old nurse or the like of that. An old nurse explains everything," said Marion. "I will just let him understand that's how it is, and that we call her aunty because we are fond of her. You may do that and no harm—just for kindness. And what is she more than an old nurse? You know yourself she would not come to Rosmore for that—not to expose us. Her and me, we both understand. I will just explain it all."

"One would think," said Archie, "that Saumarez was of great importance, and what he thought. And most likely he thinks nothing about it. His mind is full of his own affairs."

"And what are his own affairs?" said Marion scornfully. "Maybe that is one of his own affairs," she added with a faint blush, as Archie turned upon her in surprise. "You never can tell what may turn out to be important and what not. Eddy is just nothing in himself. But though he will have no money, he will have a good property and a fine house, and a position and all that. And we have plenty of money and nothing more. It might be a thing to be taken into consideration on both sides. But you will never understand that, nor perhaps papa either, and I will just have all the responsibility thrown upon myself."

"What responsibility?" said Archie, more and more astonished.

"Oh!" she cried, with a little stamp of her foot, "as if the like of you would ever understand!" She gave him a little indignant push from her in the impatience of her soul, but turned to him again after a moment's interval. "I am not saying, mind," said Marion, "that there is anything in it. There may be nothing in it. It may just pass over, and be of no consequence. I will maybe be in a much better position when I have gone to court, and have been seen in society and all that. But you should remember, Archie, that we're just very new people. Papa is a new man. His name is known, but except for our money we are just nobody. Now mamma is different. I was angry at the time to think that papa had married again

and brought in a grand lady that would look down upon you and me ; but I've come to a different way of thinking now. I just study her and take a lesson by her, and I can see if we are to get on in the world that she is the one to help us most."

"I don't want her help," cried Archie, "and if that's what you call getting on in the world——"

"Oh," cried Marion, with a sigh of impatience, "you are just like a bairn. To think that you cannot see for yourself, you that are a man ! What are we to do if we don't get into society ? You would rather be back in the Sauchiehall Road, with your football and your friends, than in a grand house like this, with nobody that cares for you, and nothing that you can do."

"May," said the young man, sadly, "many a time I have thought that myself,—far rather ! It was a kind of living, and this is none—to be waited on hand and foot when you're not used to it, and feel like a fool, and have nothing to do. But that's not all the harm it's done. When I went back to the Sauchiehall Road, I was just as much out of place there ! That's ended : and the other is begun, and there's no satisfaction anywhere. I will be faithful to Aunty Jean, poor body, that was so kind to us, while I have a breath to draw," he exclaimed with energy. Then sinking into despondency, "But I cannot go back there, and I am out of place here ; and there is no good that I can see in a world that's all a vain show, both for the rich and the poor."

"Well," said Marion, with a certain satisfaction, "you see then just as I do. We must get ourselves well into what we have, for we never can go back to what we were. And the only way that we can do it is by——" She broke off with a little laugh. "You can find it out for yourself, but you need not put a spoke into another person's wheel. I am not saying that Eddy Saumarez will be of any consequence in the end. Maybe I will not care to know them after I have been to court. I will not commit myself, you may be sure. I will aye have a way of escape, if I should change my mind. But it was just silly beyond measure to give him a story about Aunty Jean. He will take her off, and make everybody laugh. You can see yourself how he makes fun, and takes everybody off. That is what amuses people, and makes them ask him. He could make it very funny about Aunty Jean. Oh, I know all they say, and I'm getting to understand. If you can tell them stories, and keep them laughing, it's all they think of. And you to give him the occasion with poor Aunty Jean !"

"He had better not let me hear him say a word about Aunty Jean," said Archie, between his closed teeth.

"Oh, he'll not let you hear him," said Marion. She was altogether unconscious of the fact that Eddy took herself off with perfect effect, so that even Mrs. Rowland had difficulty in looking severe enough.

Archie went to join the party in the smoking-room after this conversation, with more uneasiness than ever. He was not quite clear about his sister's meaning. Marion was too far-seeing, too full of calculations for her brother. He had himself his own thoughts : but they were of a very different turn from hers. Rosamond Saumarez was to Archie a being of a different species from himself or any one belonging to him. It had not occurred to him that he could appropriate this beautiful lady, and make life more possible by her means. She was still upon her pedestal, a thing apart, a being to be remotely admired, scarcely even as yet worshipped : for in worship itself there is a certain appropriation, and his imagination had not gone so far as that, had not ventured to use any pronoun of possession, even with goddess attached to it. In no way had he imagined that she could ever be his, but always something beyond reach, as superior to him as earth is to heaven. The impression she produced upon him was subduing, rather than exciting. To think that there could be such a distance between him and any other human creature, as there was between him and Rosamond, doubled the mystery and awe of the world on the threshold of which he was standing, to the disturbed and unsatisfied mind of the boy-man, so rudely shaken out of all his old habitudes, so little at home in his new. At no time could Marion's frank calculations of how she could help herself up the ascent she meant to climb, by grasping a chance hand, this man's or another's, as happened to suit her best, have been possible to her brother. He faintly apprehended what she meant, but found it so uncongenial that his mind declined to look into it. There are some who feel themselves forced, in the course of nature, to investigate, and come to the bottom of such questions ; and there are some who shake themselves uneasily free of an examination which could end in nothing but pain.

Archie had no wish to think badly of Marion, to bring down the ideal of his sister : so he shook off the question of her meaning, and left it alone. There was not much pleasure to him in the sitting in the smoking-room, where he found his father and Eddy in full discussion, the latter bearing all the *frain* of the conversation, and making his host laugh with his lively descriptions and sketches. Archie was conscious that he presented a complete foil and contrast to Eddy, as he went in and seated himself a little in the background, notwithstanding the invitations of both the gentlemen to draw his chair nearer to the fire. He liked to skulk behind, Rowland thought angrily, with vexation, to himself—never could take his place simply, always kept behind backs. Perhaps young Saumarez was not any more than Archie the son he would have chosen. But yet what a difference there was !

The day of the ball was approaching apace, and everything in the house began to feel the excitement of the coming event. There was less than a week to go, when Eddy broached the

subject of Johnson—of Chad's—and the possibility of procuring him an invitation.

"Oh," he said, "there is that—friend of mine up at the head of the loch." (Naturally, Eddy, however much he might endeavour to conceal the fact, said "lock," but I need not spoil my orthography by repeating his error.) "I wonder if you would be inclined to let me bring him, Mrs. Rowland. I scarcely like to ask; but he's all alone, you know, and knows nobody, and looks wistful when one sees him."

"You should bring him in to dinner, Eddy," said the ever-hospitable Rowland.

"No, sir, I don't think I shud like to do that. He has not paid the extra twopence for manners. In a crowd he might pass muster, but at your table—"

There was the faintest emphasis on the words, which inferred a delicate compliment. And Rowland was pleased.

"Mr. Johnson?" said Evelyn, doubtfully. "I did not feel quite sure about him. He was a little—odd."

"College duns are generally odd," said the unblushing Eddy.

"Are you quite certain, my dear boy, that he is a college don?"

"For my own part," said Eddy presently, "I should probably like him much better if he were not. But I suppose there can't be two Johnsons—of Chad's."

"No, I suppose not," said Evelyn, still doubtfully. "At the same time," she added, "one would have thought if there was one thing you could be sure of in a college don it would be grammar—and his—and that they should talk like gentlemen."

"I don't know," said Eddy, reflectively, "that one can be so very sure of that; now that everything goes by competition, you can't tell by his profession that any man is a gentleman. Besides, they speak Latin between themselves," said the young man, with an unmoved countenance.

"Eddy!" cried Rosamond.

"Well, they do. I allow it's queer, but I have heard them *avec mes propres oreilles, va!* and Latin grammar is quite different from English—far more elaborate, and that sort of thing. English translated out of Latin would naturally sound a little strange."

Even Evelyn looked at him with a little surprise, uncertain whether to laugh or not. She was but little interested in the ways of college duns. She had a kind of belief that there was something in what he said about competition. The gardener's son was at college, and if he came to be a don he would no doubt remain a little inelegant in point of grammar.

While she was thus pondering, her husband took the matter in hand.

"Send him an invitation as Eddy's friend," he said, in his large and liberal way; "if he were a coal-heaver what does it matter, so long as he is Eddy's friend? And I don't suppose the

young ladies will think of his conversation ; they will be more interested in his dancing. It's a question of heel and toe, and not of h's."

"I don't know that he dances much," said Eddy ; "but he could always prop up a doorway, and it would please him awfully to come and look on."

"You'll ask him, of course, Evelyn," Mr. Rowland said.

And he was asked, of course ; and the invitation was handed to him next day on the hillside, where he met Archie and Eddy and the gamekeeper, and was supplied with a gun, to the great disdain of the latter functionary.

"That man has never had a gun in his hands till this day," said Roderick, aside ; "keep out of his road, for any sake, Mr. Airchie : he will never hit a grouse, but he might put a wheen shots into you or me."

"I was not very much better myself," said Archie. "I can feel for him, Roderick."

"Oh, you," said the gamekeeper. It was his young master he was speaking to, and that has a wonderfully mollifying influence. "You were maybe no to call experienced, but you were neither frightened for your gun nor swerd to use her. Keep you to that side, Mr. Airchie, and if the other gentleman gets it, it's just his ain friend, and he maun bear the brunt."

"I thought you liked Mr. Saumarez, Roderick."

"So I do like him, though he has an awfu' funny name. He has a good eye for a bird, and will make a fine shot when he's come to his prime, and just makes you lose your manners with his fun and nonsense. But if he brings out a stick like this upon the moor, he must just rin the risk of him. Come you, Mr. Airchy, to this side."

Eddy, on his hand, had something to say to his guest. "Have you got me that thing ?" he said.

"They won't give it up till they see the money, Master Eddy. I've told you so before."

"Very well, Johnson. I have an invitation for you, in my pocket, to the ball—and I have a cheque in my pocket, which is better than money. You shall neither have the one nor the other till I have that paper in my own hands."

"Give and take then, Master Eddy," said the other.

"You ass, keep down the muzzle of your gun ! No. I must have it in my hands to see it's all right before I let you touch the other. Oh, just as you please ! but that's my last word."

"You don't suppose I carry it about in my pocket," said Johnson.

"I suppose nothing. I only tell you what I'll do. Give it me that I may see it's right and the genuine thing, and you shall have the cheque, which is as good a cheque as any in the world, whatever the other may be."

"You might play me some tricks, or stop it at the bank," said Johnson.

"By Jove, that's an idea. I'll do so, if you don't look sharp with that other thing."

"Well," said Johnson, "if that's how it is to be, I'll bring it up to you to-morrow morning to the house—and then you can introduce me to the ladies. I ought to know them first, before I come to the dance."

"No," said Eddy, "you can come to the ball, where it will be fun: but if you come near the house till the night of the ball, I'll let off my gun by accident, as you'll do presently if you don't mind, and take your wretched life. Now, you hear. You can come to old Rankin's cottage in the wood to-morrow, if you like, at twelve. You can say you want a dog—he'll not let you have it, for he never sells them to cads; but it will do for an excuse."

"By Jove," said Johnson, "if you don't mind what you say, I've got a gun, and I can have an accident too."

"Put it down, you ass!" cried Eddy, striking down the muzzle of the gun, which, in the confusion, went off, nearly knocking down by the concussion the unfortunate Johnson, and ploughing into the heather and mossy soil. The neophyte thought he had killed somebody, and fell down on his wretched knees. "I swear to God I never meant nothing. I never meant to 'it any man," he cried.

"Oh, get up, you brute, and hold your tongue," cried Eddy. He added, shaking him by the shoulder, "If you talk when you're at Rosmore, you'll be turned out of the house. I've told them you speak nothing but Latin—mind you hold your tongue if you don't want to do for both yourself and me."

## CHAPTER XXXII

EDDY took his morning walk to Rankin's cottage next day; but he did not meet any one there. He went in and endeavoured to treat with the old gamekeeper for a dog, but found the old man quite indisposed for any such negotiation.

"Na, na," he said, "I have nae dogues that I can part with. They're a' bespoken. Lady Jean has mostly friends that want them. I canna part with one o' them. Mr. Archie from Rosmore House, he came and picked up my best. I couldna well refuse the son o' the place—but that's thrown me far behind. Ye'll excuse me for saying it, but you're a stranger, my young gentleman, and I'm my lord's auld servant, and Lady Jean's. I must think o' them first."

"Do you think I would not be kind to it, you old sceptic?" said Eddy.

"I wasna saying ye would not be kind to it. There's few folk wicked to dogues. I was saying I have none to dispose of

Ye will not be staying very lang at the Hoose? Ye've been here a good while, the young lady and you. Few visitors bide as lang now-a-days. I canna tell whether it's the faut of having so many enjoyments, or if it's the faut of the hosts that dinna give a sufficient welcome; but I notice that it's three days, and that kind of a veesit that's popular now. No time to turn yoursel' round in. Just the day of coming and the day of going, and one or at the most twa days between."

"We are not like that," said Eddy, "we have come for a visitation, don't you see: but I am sorry you think that we are staying too long."

"Oh, it is none o' my business," said Rankin, with a serious face. "I'm thinking ye will be taking the road after this ball? they're a' talking about it. To hear what they say you would think it was aye o' the Queen's balls."

"Well," said Eddy, "I flatter myself it will be quite as pretty. By the way, Rankin, have you had any more encounters with that great scholar, don't you know—the college man from Oxford—that I saw here?"

"I'm glad," said Rankin, "that you've given me an occasion of speaking. Sir, ye're young, and your experience is no great, though you have a real good opinion of yourself. Yon's nae college man—or, if maybe in these times he may have gotten himself to be a college man—at least I can say this of him, that he's nae gentleman. Just you be awfu' careful what you're about wi' yon man. I would not trust him a foot's length out of my sight. He has nae root o' the matter in him: neither ceevility, which is little thought upon, I allow, in the training of a college—nor learning. He is awfu' cautious no to open his mouth on sich subjects; but my impression is that he has naething to say, and he's nae mair a gentleman than yon doug. Mair! I'm meaning far less. Rover's a real gentleman. He'll make place for ye by the fire, and he'll give you his best attention when you speak, and thank ye when ye do him a pleasure. A good doug of a good breed might learn manners to a prince; but as for yon friend of yours—"

"I never said he was a friend of mine," said Eddy; "but you are too severe, Rankin. How should you be such a judge, not being a gentleman yourself?"

The old gamekeeper's ruddy colour deepened a little.

"Sir," he said, "I've aye found the best sign of a well-bred man was that he gave credit to other folk of being as good as himself—if no better. Them that fail in that will never come up to my standard. Ye think nae doubt that ye ken better than me—but just you take warning from an auld man. I've seen a' kinds. Maybe you are no aware that I was much about the world in my younger years with my lord—and my lord wasna very particular in these days, though he's a douce man now. I've seen a' kinds; but a worse kind than yon Johnson man—"

"Johnson of St. Chad's, Rankin—mind what you're saying."

"He's nae mair of St. Chad's than I am! There's both a note and a query in my paper from the real man—on a subject, it is true, that he doesna understand—he goes clean against my reasoning, which to any unprejudiced mind would be mair than conclusive; but it's dated from a place away in Wales, or somewhere far to the south of this. Na, na, yon man is nae scholar, and if ye'll take my word for it, nae gentleman either. His name may be Johnson, but he's just masqueradin' in another's local designation, and I wouldna trust him, no a fit beyond what I could see him. Ye are a very clever lad, but ye canna have the experience of the like o' me."

"Here he is, Rankin; you may be right, but you must be civil," Eddy said.

"Ceevil! in my ain house. He kens John Rankin little that thinks it needful to tell me that. Good-morning to ye, sir," said the gamekeeper, raising his voice. "Come ben without hesitation, there's naebody but freends here."

"Oh, friends! I don't seek my friends in a hole like this," said Johnson, evidently bent on showing his quality. "I've nearly been blown away coming along your infernal lock, and I've been in the mud up to my ankles on what you call the paths in the wood."

"It's a pity," said Rankin grimly, "that the maker of them was not mair careful to suit baith land and water to your needs."

"The maker of them," said Johnson, "could have understood nothing about making roads—some of your country fellows that are behind in everything. Oh, you are here, Master Eddy. I've come to see after one of these little dogs you talk so much about."

"And what may you be wanting with a little dogue?" said Rankin, with scrupulous politeness.

"I?—just what other people want, I suppose. Let's see, old gentleman, what sort you have got."

"I have no little dogues," said the gamekeeper, folding his hands on his chest. The impulse was so strong upon him to dip into the nest, where their small conversation as they tumbled over each other was quite audible, that he had to grasp his coat with his hands, in order to refrain.

"I can hear them squeaking," said Johnson.

Rankin turned a serene glance upon Eddy. "Ye see," he said, "what I tellt ye. What kind of a person would use a word like that? My dogues, sir," he added, "are all bespoke. I have certain ladies and gentlemen, great friends of mine, that get a' I can spare. Ye hear naething squeaking here, but just a few remarks made atween themselves by a sma' family, that are of as good blood and race as any here."

"Oh, come, my man," said Johnson, "I'm not a softy to be cheated out of my money like that. I'll give a fair price, but

you needn't think to take me in, with your ladies and gentlemen. I know what a dog is worth."

"Hold hard, Johnson," said Eddy. "It's a monopoly, don't you know, and Rankin can do what he likes. He knows a lot, I can tell you. He knows you're in South Wales or somewhere and not here—"

"I?" cried Johnson again. "I never was in Wales in my life."

"I tellt ye sae, sir," said Rankin significantly ; "and that being proved, I hope you will mind the rest of my advice."

"What is he saying, Master Eddy? What has he been advising you? Something about me? I'll trouble you, my man, to keep your advice where you keep your dogs, and not to interfere with me."

"I am no man o' yours," said Rankin, "any more than you are a man o' mine. I advise my friends for their good just when I please. Ye are in my poor bit dwelling, and that gives ye a privilege : but I must do my duty by a young gentleman that is a veesitor at the Hoose, and therefore more or less under what I may call my protection when he comes to see me."

"You are no match for him, Johnson," said Eddy laughing. "You needn't try. Come along, old fellow. I'll show you that business I told you of. Don't be afraid, Rankin. Whatever I do that's wrong it will be my own fault and not his. I'm young, but I know a thing or two for all that."

"Mair than you should—mair than you should!" cried the gamekeeper ; "but come soon again and see me, sir ; there's a hantle mair advice I would like to give ye. Janet," said Rankin solemnly to his wife as the door was closed, "if there's any devilry comes to your ears, mind you it's that man."

"Hoots, John," said Mrs. Rankin, who had come "ben" with her glistening arms wrapped in her apron, from the midst of her washing, at the sound of the opening door : it was almost all that good woman ever said.

In about half an hour from this time Eddy Saumarez reached Rosmore, and made his way to his room in much haste. He was drenched with the rain which for some time had been coming down small and soft, but persistent, after the fashion of the west country, and only waved his hand to the party collected over the great fire in the hall, where the decorations were already being put up. "I am so wet, I must change before I can be of any use," he said, as he passed : but before he succeeded in gaining the shelter of his room, his sister came out upon him from hers, where she seemed to have been keeping watch. She put her hand upon his wet sleeve and detained him.

"Eddy," she said, "what have you been doing? You have got into some scrape? For goodness' sake remember where you are, and all that depends upon it." Rosamond was very serious, she had even a pucker of anxiety on her usually smooth brow.

"I have got very wet," said Eddy, "if that's what you mean :

and probably a bad cold depends on it, which would be pleasant on the eve of a ball. If you've got a sermon to preach you can do it after. I must change my clothes now."

"Oh, what does getting wet matter," said Rosamond, "or catching cold either? Who is this man you have made them ask? If it's any one that ought not to come, and father hears of it—"

"It's Johnson—of St. Chad's," said Eddy, pausing to laugh at his joke, which had already prospered so much beyond his hopes.

"What do you know of St. Chad's? And father, who set me to keep you straight? Eddy, I didn't mind any humbugging with grandmamma, she deserves it, and you had a great deal of provocation; but they're good people here—"

"Who are good people? my little girl, or your fellow that you can turn round your finger? I'll answer for them, my child. And the father, with his money—"

"He has been very kind to us," said Rosamond. "I will not have him mystified. Tell me who this man is, or I will go straight to Mrs. Rowland and tell her not to let him come."

"Oh, he'll come fast enough," said Eddy, "he's got his invitation; all the country couldn't keep him from coming. But if you have any bravos at your disposition, and can have him waylaid and thrown into the loch, do it, my dear, with my blessing; I shan't mind."

"Then why, why did you make them ask him?" cried Rosamond.

Eddy laughed; there was excitement in his laugh, but there was also amusement. "Why?" he said, "for fun! isn't that reason enough? To watch him will be the best joke that ever was. I'm to introduce him to all the bigwigs, and shan't I do it, too! Find me a title for Miss Eliza, Rose. How he'll listen to her!—and lend the nephews money—"

"Eddy, it's some wretched money-lender—"

"Well," said Eddy, with a laugh, "there are many worse trades; they must have it, or they couldn't lend it. Go away and let me change my wet clothes."

Rosamond went away as she was bidden, partially satisfied. She was a girl of great experience in many ways. She knew the shifts of living when there is very little money to live on, and yet all the luxuries of existence have to be secured. She was not acquainted with the expedient of doing without what you cannot afford to buy, but all the other manners of doing it were tolerably familiar to her. She had none of that shrinking from a money-lender which people, who know nothing about them, are apt to suffer from. She even appreciated the advantage of keeping on good terms with members of that fraternity. It was one of their weaknesses to be eager about getting into society, putting on a semblance of gentility. Rosamond went back to her room, with that air of a princess which was natural to her, shaking her head a little over Eddy's joke, but not so disturbed

by it as she had been. Her only hope was that Johnson would not come to the ball covered with jewellery, that he would understand the wisdom of holding his tongue and refraining from the dance. She herself knew very well how to defend herself from the penalty of dancing with him. Rosamond was not out, but yet she was aware of those guiles by which girls, obliged to accept any partner that offers, defend themselves from carrying out their engagements when that is necessary. She was in no uneasiness on her own account, and a faint sense that it would be fun to see the money-lender floundering among people who after all, whatever airs they might give themselves, were not, Rosamond reflected, in society, stole through her mind. It does not matter so much when people are not in society who they associate with. Who thinks of their lesser distinctions? You are in society or you are not; and if the latter is the case what does it matter? This was the thought in her mind. She hoped that Johnson was not too Hebraic, that his nose was less pronounced than usual, and his eyes less shining. Indeed, as she endeavoured to recall his appearance, he had no speciality in the way of nose, so that really on the whole there would be little harm done. If any society man happened to be there who recognized the money-lender, he could either divine the real state of the case or suppose that the Rowlands were not so well off as they looked. And in neither case would that do any harm.

Eddy, for his part, locked his door behind him when he got inside his own room: and he risked the cold which would be so awkward on the eve of the ball, by remaining still for some time in his wet clothes. What he did was to take a paper from his pocket, which he carried to the light of the window, examining it closely, holding it up to the daylight which was subdued by the overhanging shadow of the trees, and the clouds of rain sweeping up from the sea. Then after reading it over line by line, he took it, holding it very closely in both hands as if he had been afraid that it might take wings to itself and flee away, to the smouldering fire—for it was nearly the end of October, and fires were very necessary to combat the damp of the place. Then Eddy put the paper carefully into the centre of the fire, where it curled up and blackened and began to smoke, but did not burst into flame until he had seized the box of matches on the mantelpiece and had strewed a handful upon it. Then there was a series of small distinct reports like minute guns, and the whole flamed up. His clothes steamed as he stood before the fire, but he was not aware of it, nor that the damp was meantime penetrating into every muscle and limb.

After this Eddy dressed himself cheerfully in dry clothes and went down-stairs. He had never been more lively or entertaining. He went down to find the whole party occupied with their letters, which came in before lunch, making that meal either a joyful feast or a meal of anxiety. Rowland it was who knitted

his brows most keenly after he had received his letters. Over one of them he lingered long, casting glances occasionally at Archie, who had no letters, and who was amusing himself furtively with the two dogs, Roy and Dhu, which he had abandoned on discovering that they took to his step-mother more than to himself. Such a preference is always irritating to the legitimate owner of dog or man. He could not forgive them for their bad taste: nevertheless, when Mrs. Rowland was out of the way, the infantile graces of the two puppies were more than flesh and blood could stand out against. He had withdrawn into a deep recess of the hall in which there was a window, and where he considered himself free from inspection, and there was rolling over the two little balls, with their waving limbs and the gleams of fun that were visible under the tufts of hair that fell over their eyes. Though they were rolling over and over each other in the height of play, attacking and retreating before Archie's hands, with which he pulled their ears and tails, now lifting one, now another, by some illegitimate portion of hair, each little dog kept an eye upon where the Mistress sat, retired in a large chair, reading her letters, waiting till she moved or looked, and ready at a moment to pick themselves up, get upon their respective legs, and run out of the recess, one after the other, as if they had been anxiously awaiting the moment when her attention might relax and she would have leisure to bestow upon her faithful retainers. It was not, however, Mrs. Rowland, but her husband, who disturbed the pastime. He looked up from his letter and called "Archie!" in a voice which meant mischief. Archie looked up startled.

"Yes," he said, "I am here."

"How was it you never mentioned that you had gone to see Mrs. Brown the other day when you were in Glasgow?"

Archie raised himself up, pushing the puppies away from him. "I—scarcely could have been in Glasgow," he said, though with a slight faltering in his voice, it was so little true, "without going to see Aunt Jean."

"That is true enough," said his father, in a slightly softened tone. "It was of course your first duty: but—is this story she tells me true?"

"She is very little likely," said Archie, "to tell anything that is not true; but I don't know what she has told you."

"She says—that she asked you to help a poor comrade of yours who is ill, and must go away to save his life, and that you refused—is that true?"

Archie stood in the vacant space formed by the recess, turning his face towards his father—pale, miserable, half-defiant, without a word to say.

"Is that true?" said Rowland, his voice pealing through the hall. It disturbed the whole party, drawing their attention from their letters. Mrs. Rowland looked up with an air half of terror, half of compassion. "James, James!" she said in a low voice.

"Let alone, Evelyn! you don't understand. Do you hear me, sir? come forward; don't skulk, as you are always doing. Is it true?"

Archie made a step forward, his brows bent over his eyes, his head sunk between his shoulders. He saw them all turning to him—his stepmother, with a compassionate look, which he could tolerate less than if it had been the triumph and satisfaction which he believed she felt; Rosamond raising her head from the letter she was reading with a half-contemptuous surprise; and Eddy! Eddy in the background, unseen by any, sending over their heads a look of half-amused, half-sympathetic comment, opening his eyes wide and raising his eyebrows. Eddy looked—not as if he had anything to do with it, but as if partly indignant, partly astonished, yet as good as saying—that is just as they all do.

"Yes," said Archie, at last; "it is true."

His father began, with an exclamation, to speak, but recalled to himself by another low but emphatic call from his wife, "James, James!" restrained himself. He gave Archie, however, a look, under which the unfortunate young man fell back, feeling as if something had struck him to his heart. Oh, the contempt in it, the indignation, as of something unworthy a word! and to know that he did not deserve it, and yet have his lips sealed and nothing to say for himself. It was almost harder to bear than any fury of reproach. Archie felt himself shamed in the way in which shame was most bitter, and in the presence of those who made his disgrace most terrible to bear—the girl whom he admired with a kind of adoration, and the woman whom he hated without knowing why. As he stood there, drawn back a step, lowering, gloomy, his eyes sunk in their sockets, he looked the picture of conscious meanness, and almost guilt. And such he appeared to his father, whose passion of disappointment and rage of offended affection was scarcely to be restrained. Rowland got up from his seat abruptly and went into the library, which was the room he used. He came back in a minute or two, holding a cheque in his hand, which he tossed at his son, as he had once tossed the twenty pound note. "Send that," he said, "to your aunt for your friend." He walked back towards his place, then turned again, and adding, "By to-day's post," sat down with his face towards the fire.

Archie stood for a moment with the cheque lying at his feet. All the old rebellion rose within his heart. It was more bitter this time than the last. Should he leave it there lying, the wretched money, and turn his back upon his father, who even when he was kind was so in scorn, and flung the help for the friend, whom he believed Archie had refused to help, as he would have flung a bone to a dog? Should he go and leave it, and turn his back upon this house for ever? There was a moment's struggle, very bitter and sore, in Archie's breast: and

then he remembered Colin, the pale-faced lad, whose illness, it had been no great surprise, but so overwhelming a blow to hear of, just at the moment when he had made himself incapable of helping him. Then he stooped down, and picking up the paper went to the writing-table and wrote a hasty letter, stooping over the blotting-book as he stood. "Aunt Jean," he wrote, "you have done me a very ill turn, but I do not blame you: and my father will perhaps end by driving me desperate; and most likely you will none of you ever know the reason. But here's the money for Colin Lamont, though it's been flung at my head, like the time before, and though I have not even you to take my part now. Anyhow it will be good for him. His is a better case, however ill he is, than mine.--A. ROWLAND."

Archie put this letter and the cheque into an envelope, which he placed conspicuously on the table that his father might see it, and then he left the house, with a soul more heavy and a heart more sore than words could say.

"Your brother is always getting to loggerheads with your father," said Eddy to Marion, who was helping him with a design for the wall. "You should give him good advice, and get him to take a jaw pleasantly. They all do it, don't you know?"

"Who all do it?—but I'm astonished at papa," said Marion; "for why should Archie give all his money to a lad that was not at all of his kind, but just a companion for a while, when we were—not as we are now. Archie has not so much money that he could give it away to—a friend."

"Why should he indeed?" said Eddy. "Friends that want money are always to be had in plenty; but money is best in one's pocket, which is the right place for it, as you say."

"I am just surprised at papa," said Marion; "for it should be a father's part to keep us from foolishness, and not to put it into our heads. Archie is silly enough without giving him any encouragement. He was always for giving things away; and this Colin—for I am sure it must be Colin—is just one that will never be better whatever is done for him. It is just throwing away money.—Shall I cut out all these leaves the same, or would it be better if they were a little different, like leaves upon a tree?"

"Oh, make them like the drawing, please," said Eddy.—"Archie is a very good fellow, but he takes things too seriously. What is the use of looking so tragical? The best of fathers loves a chance for a sermon. You must speak to him like a mother, Miss May."

"I have always been the most sensible," said May; "but I am the youngest, and I don't see how I could speak to him like a mother. I will, perhaps, speak to papa, and tell him how wrong it is, when a boy is disposed to be saving and takes care of his money, to put such things in his head. For what could

Colin Lamont matter to him in comparison with himself? And where would we have been now, if papa had thrown away his money and made that kind of use of it? It is not for Archie's sake, for Archie is just very silly; but I think I will perhaps speak to papa."

And then they returned with enthusiasm to the decorations for the hall.

Poor Archie, for his part, wandered out disconsolate upon the hills: everything was turning out badly for him. There had been a moment when things were better, when he had overcome various troubles—his unaccustomed gun, and Roderick and the groom, and the sudden valse into which he had been driven, with still less chance of escape. For a week or two things had gone so well, that he had began to trust a little in his fate; but now again the balance had turned, and everything was going badly. Small comfort was there in prospect for him. He had denuded himself altogether of all his revenues, and now there came upon him the consciousness of many things that would be required of him, many claims which he would be unable to respond to. He would not have a sixpence to give to a boy, or a penny to a beggar. He would have to guard against every little expense as if he were a beggar himself. He could not go to Glasgow again, however much he might wish to do so, scarcely even to go across the ferry. He had nothing, and would have nothing till Christmas, these long and weary months. And Eddy did nothing but lift his eyebrows, half-amused at the misery of which he was the cause. And never could Archie explain, neither to his father, nor to Aunt Jean, the reason why he had refused her prayer for Colin Lamont. When he thought of that, Archie gnashed his teeth, and in the silence of the hill-side, dashed his clenched hands into the air. He must bear it all and never say a word—and all the time see before him the other, smiling, who could make it all plain. But Archie did not know how much greater and more awful trouble was yet in store.

### CHAPTER XXXIII

THE night of the ball arrived at last. The stables in Rosmore, and all the accommodation to be had in the neighbourhood, were filled with horses and carriages of every description. Everybody had come. The great element of success, which predetermines the question, the arrival of all expected, made the hearts of the hosts glad. Rowland had forgotten that little episode which still hung heavy on Archie's soul, and stood beaming, the proudest man in the country, to receive his guests. The sound of the arrivals was music to his ears. That he, so simple as he stood there, the foundry lad, the railway man, the creator of his own

fortune, should be receiving the best people in the countryside, opening large and liberal doors of hospitality, entertaining in the superior position of a host people whose names he had heard afar off in those early days, was a sort of happiness which he could scarcely believe, and which filled his heart with a glow of elation and proud delight. Perhaps it was not a very elevated or elevating sentiment. To shake hands with the Earl of Clydesdale, and welcome him to one's house, might not fill one's own bosom with any sense of bliss. But Lord Clydesdale was to James Rowland the king of his native district, high above all cavil or partnership, and there could be no such evident sign to him of the glorious position to which he had himself attained. This sense of triumph beamed all over him, and made his accent more and more cordial, his anxiety about the pleasure of his guests more and more warm. There was nothing he would not have done to add to the brightness of the joyous assembly. The least little momentary shade of dullness in any corner went to his heart. When he saw either girl or boy who was not dancing, he would come down upon them like a rescue party, providing partner, or supper, or refreshment, or repose, whatsoever they wanted. It could not be said that his success and glory made him selfish. He wanted everybody to enjoy as he was himself enjoying. Impossible to imagine a more beneficent form of success.

He had quite forgotten his censure of Archie. He clapped him on the shoulder when he appeared, with an exhortation—"Now, Archie, man! shake yourself together—put your best foot foremost—make it go off! Mind we are all upon our promotion. If it is not the finest ball that has been given on Clydeside, I will never hold up my head more." This address a little lightened Archie's heart, still sore and heavy from the blame to which he had been subject—so undeservedly as he knew, but as nobody else was aware. And he was young, and though alarmed by the part he had himself to play, it was not in human nature not to feel some stir of exhilaration in the arrival of all that fine company, the music striking up, the crowd of other young people streaming in. What he would have thought of admission to such a scene a year ago! To be sure, this was chastened by the thought of the important part he had to play, as son of the house. He found Rosamond at his elbow, after his father had given him that exhortation.

"You should ask Lady Jean first," said the young lady, holding, as usual, her head high and not looking at him while she spoke.

"Me—ask Lady Jean! to what?" he asked, with an uneasy laugh.

"To dance, of course—unless the Duchess comes: is the Duchess coming? Without her you have nothing better than a baronet and his wife. Therefore, unless your father dances, you must take out Lady Jean."

"My father—dances?" cried Archie, with an uncontrollable laugh. It seemed to him the most ridiculous idea in the world.

"Most gentlemen do in their own houses," said Rosamond, "but if he does not, then you. Lady Jean first. Then Lady Marchbanks: and not for some time that little pretty woman, whose husband was knighted the other day. She is my lady too, and perhaps you would never know the difference. But please to mind what I say."

"Lady this, and Lady that—and when am I to come to you?" said Archie, taking a little courage.

"Oh, I will keep one for you—not till you have got through all your duty dances. This is the disadvantage many people say of a ball in one's own house. But I like responsibility," said Rosamond. "It is better than thinking merely what will be most fun."

By the inspiration of this double charge, Archie became a new man. He led Lady Jean very tremulously, it must be allowed, through a quadrille—or she led him, it would perhaps be better to say; but he was very docile and very humble, and her ladyship did not dislike the modest young man, who, for the first time for some days, opened full his mother's eyes, innocent and honest, upon those to whom he spoke. She said, "He's not an ill lad, that young Rowland," to the ladies about her. And Miss Eliza repeated it up and down the room. "We all know what dear Lady Jean means," cried that lady. "She is maybe sparing of her praises, but when she does say a good word, it comes from the heart. He has many things to contend against, but he's not an ill lad. I have always said it myself. Few women have greater opportunities of studying young folk than I have, though I'm only, as you may say, an old maid myself. And so is Lady Jean for that matter. We are just a real respectable fraternity—or would it be better to say sisterhood?—but that's a word with other meanings. No, he's not an ill lad. He has always been very civil to me, and the boys all like him. They say there's no humbug in him. But Lady Jean is the one to give a thing its right name."

Whether any echo of this comforting report reached Archie's ken it would be hard to tell, but it somehow blew across his father's ears, and made him laugh till the tears came to his eyes. He sought out Evelyn in the midst of her guests to report it to her. "It's Scotch praise," he said, "but it means more than you would suppose."

"I think it is very poor praise, and Archie deserves a great deal better," said his wife, which pleased him too.

"But that from Lady Jean is more than raptures from another," he replied.

As for Eddy Saumarez, though he was not much to look at, he was always a popular man, as he himself said, in a ball-room. He did not dance very gracefully, nor indeed, though his con-

fidence in himself carried him through all kinds of performances creditably, was he a graceful person in any way : but he was adroit, and despite his somewhat insignificant person, strong, and carried his partner skilfully through the most complicated crowd. His enjoyment of the evening was interrupted or increased (it would be difficult to say which) by the appearance of a man whom nobody knew, and most people took for one of the servants (a supposition very injurious to Mr. Rowland's servants, who were well-made, well-set-up individuals, excellent specimens of humanity). Johnson wore an evening coat with long tails, too long for him, and a white tie with long ends too big for him, and gloves with half an inch of vacant finger, which made his hands look like a bundle of loose skeins of white yarn. His face wore an anxious look as he came in unnoticed, eagerly looking for the only face he knew. Even the genial Rowland, who was ready to welcome everybody, passed over this personage with vague surprise, supposing that he must belong to some reserve force of the pantry, or had been brought in in attendance on some guest. He knew nobody but Eddy, and Eddy, who was dancing without intermission, contrived never to catch his *protégé's* eyes. It was not that he was unconscious of the presence of this visitor, whom nobody took any notice of. On the contrary, Eddy kept a careful watch upon him in his corner.

"Look yonder," he said to his partner ; "but don't look as if you were looking. Do you see that queer little being in the corner ? Oh, yes, I know him ; but I don't mean to see him. He has got an invitation here by mistake, and he depends on me to introduce him right and left.—Who is he ? ah, that's what I can't tell. He is not a man I shall introduce to you. Did you ever see such a droll little beggar ? I knew he would be fun. There he goes prowling into the other corner, where he thinks he will catch my eye. But I don't mean him to catch my eye. Oh, you know well enough, don't you, how to avoid seeing any one you don't want to see ? Cruel ? no : he has no business to be here. The little brute must pay for his impudence. Reverse, shall we ? Ah, he thought he had me then !" Eddy said with a laugh. "We were running right into him. But you'll see I shall get clear away."

Perhaps Rosamond heard some part of this talk as her brother darted past. For it was she in all her pride who sailed up to poor Johnson in his corner, who was diving under the dancers' arms and stretching over their shoulders, in a vain attempt to attract the attention of his false friend.

"You are looking for my brother," she said, "and he is paying no attention. He seldom does when it is not for his own advantage. But perhaps I may do as well."

Johnson murmured something about surprise and honour. "You will do just as well, Miss Saumarez, if you will introduce me to some nice girls," he said eagerly. "Master Eddy promised

me : but I know his promises is like pie-crust. May I have the pleasure of the next dance?"

Rosamond almost looked at him in her scorn—the next dance! as though every place on her card had not been filled in the first five minutes.

"I will dance a quadrille with you," she said, "if you will remain here quietly till I am ready, and not ask any one else."

"Oh, miss!" cried Johnson, in delight ; "fancy my conducting myself like a gay Lothario, and asking any one else, when I have an offer from you?"

Rosamond was not used to blushing, but she coloured high at this. She did not see the fun of it as Eddy would have done. She had no sense of humour.

"If you will wait here till I am ready, I will dance with you," she said.

Johnson had been very indignant and deeply disappointed, not to be introduced to "the big-wigs," as Eddy had promised. But when Eddy's beautiful sister proposed to him to dance with her, not even waiting to be asked, his feelings sustained a wonderful change. He relaxed his watch upon Eddy, and waited with wonderful patience for the blissful moment when he should take his place among that dazzling throng. With this before him, he could enjoy the sight and the ecstatic sensation of forming part of that assembly, even though he knew no big-wigs. When they saw him dancing with Miss Saumarez, who was one of the beauties, if not, Johnson thought, flattered and flattering, *the* beauty of the evening, they would change their minds about him. And indeed, the shabby little man made an extraordinary sensation when he joined, by the side of Miss Saumarez, the next quadrille. Who was he? where did he come from? everybody asked. And whispers ran among the throng, that a person so shabby, dancing with Miss Saumarez, one of the house party, must to the blood of the millionaires belong, and was probably the scion of a secondary Rothschild. Much curiosity was roused concerning him, and shabby as he looked, there is little doubt that after Rosamond he might have danced with almost any one he pleased. As a matter of fact, Archie, always good-natured, and unsuspicuous of anything remarkable about Johnson, introduced him to several ladies, who did not object to allow him to inscribe his name upon their programmes. And Marion did more than this. She was just standing up with him for a waltz, and with her hand on his arm was about to enter the field, when another change occurred which made Johnson's appearance and behaviour more extraordinary than ever. He suddenly stopped in the midst, just at the moment when he ought to have put his limp hand upon her waist, a contact which Rosamond had been unable to submit to, but which Marion, with her much less cultivated sense, found quite unobjectionable.

"Excuse me, miss, for a moment," Johnson said, dropping her arm, and leaving her alone in the midst of the dancers.

He had seen something in the distance which made him turn pale. And it happened that at that moment, after so long and so ineffectually attempting to catch Eddy's eye, he at last succeeded in doing so without the slightest difficulty. Eddy had been startled beyond expression by the sight of Johnson's shabby figure by his sister's side, and distracted by this sight from all idea of fun ; and restraining with difficulty the impulse he had to seize the fellow by the shoulders and turn him out—which evidently he had no right to do—had followed him, no longer now with laughing eyes that saw every movement while appearing to see nothing, but with the furious gaze of the plotter upon whom the tables are turned. When Johnson started, shrank, and dropped Marion's arm, Eddy, watching, saw the whole pantomime, and saw also the fellow's almost imperceptible signal towards the window, which stood open behind its drawn curtains for the ventilation of the great warm, heated hall. Eddy turned his own sharp, suspicious eyes toward the spot at which Johnson had looked, and there he saw a somewhat startling sight—a man in morning dress, buttoned up in a warm overcoat, like a visitor newly arrived, standing at the hall door, and gazing with astonishment as at a totally unexpected scene. The sight startled him, though he did not know why. It could be nothing to him, so far as he knew. He did not know what it could be to Johnson. But he was startled. The man looked like some commercial functionary, business-like, and serious, surprised beyond measure to find himself suddenly introduced from the open air and quiet, frosty, chilly night, to the crowded ball-room with all its decorations.

Eddy made a dive through the throng towards the window, with an explanation to those around him that the draught was too much for Lady Jean.

"I must try and draw the curtains down," he said, with a shrug of his shoulders at the unreasonableness of women. And in another moment was outside, standing under the brilliant cold stars, which looked down coldly upon this curious little unexpected effect.

"What's the matter?" he said breathlessly to the other dark figure, conspicuous only by the whiteness of his large shirt, among the bushes.

"I don't know," said Johnson, "unless you've been at it again, Master Eddy. Did you see that man? that's the clerk at the bank that cashed your cheque. I don't know what brings him here, if you don't. Anyhow, I thought it the best policy to slip away."

Eddy's teeth began to chatter—perhaps with the cold.

"You confounded fool," he said, "did you give them the chance of identifying you? I didn't think you would have been such an ass."

"As for that," cried Johnson, "I'm square. I've only got to say it was given me by you, my fine young fellow. By George, I never had no suspicion. And p'raps it ain't that—p'raps it's something else; but it looks fishy seeing that fellow in the middle of all the folks dancing. It has given me a turn! I hope, Master Eddy, for your own sake, as you have not been at it again."

"Oh, what's that to you?" cried Eddy impatiently. He was biting his lower lip till it bled, unconsciously to himself.

"It might be a great deal to me," said Johnson, "if it is not on the square. They've a set of queer laws of their own in Scotland: you never know where you are with them; and you didn't trouble yourself very much to get me partners, Mr. Eddy. Oh, ah, didn't see me; tell that to them as will believe it."

"If you think you are in danger, Johnson, from the arrival of that fellow," said Eddy, "you'd better scuttle. They don't understand a joke these bank men."

"A joke," cried Johnson. "Me that am on the square if ever a man was! and you that—"

"Have nothing at all to do with it," said Eddy with cool superiority. "If you think that you're likely to get into trouble, take my advice and walk home. I'll pitch you out a coat, and it's a fine night. You should start to-morrow, as soon as it's day; and I advise you to get over the hills to Kilrossie, and take the boat there. Good-night—it's cold standing out here jabbering about nothing. You should never have come; and how dared you touch a lady, you little snob!" Eddy cried.

"By George," cried the other; and then he added with complacency in his tone: "If it's Miss Saumarez, she is a stunner, Master Eddy. It was she—that offered to me."

"You confounded, miserable little ead," said Eddy, furiously driving him back among the bushes with a sudden blow. But he stole back to the house on the outskirts of the crowd, and seizing the first coat he could find, pitched it out of a window above, on Johnson's head. He had humanity enough, though he was not unwilling to sacrifice the scapegoat, to give him something warm to wrap himself in. After this he returned to the ball-room, with a thousand apologies to his partner, and eloquent description of the difficulty he had found in so arranging the curtains as to keep the draught from Lady Jean. "The shortest way would have been to shut the window, I know," said Eddy, "but we can't have the ball-room made into a black hole of Calcutta, can we? So I compromised matters, as I always do."

"Do you, Mr. Saumarez?" said the young lady with a look of faith, such as young ladies often wear—ready to receive what he said as truth, or to laugh at it as transparent humbug, it did not matter which. And Eddy danced all night undisturbed and imperturbable. The bank clerk was nothing to him. He sat out two square dances with Miss Monteith, the

heiress. But every other on the programme Eddy danced, even the Scotch reel, of which he said, "I shall only make you all laugh, of course, but never mind." Everybody did laugh, no doubt, at his performance, but they liked him all the better for trying it. It was a part of the programme into which Archie entered with spirit, for once sure of his ground. This was at a tolerably advanced period, when the guests who lived at the greatest distance were already ordering their carriages, and Archie, in the absence of his father, after the reel was over, had to preside over all the arrangements for the conclusion of the most successful entertainment that had ever been known in Rosmore, and to give Lady Jean his arm to the door. "It has been a pleasant party," said Lady Jean. "And you must come over and see us, and have a day or two with my brother on the moors. Clydesdale, I am telling young Mr. Rowland he must come over and see what he can do among the grouse, some fine day very soon."

"You must do that," said the Earl himself. "You must do that. I will write and fix a day."

What greater honour could have been done to the son of the railway man? He felt the glory of it, though the thought of such a visit was enough to take all the courage out of Archie. He stood a little dazed by the honour that had been done him, watching the carriage as it drove away, and pleased to feel the cold fresh air upon his forehead, when the butler came up to him with a serious face. "Mr. Archibald," he said, "the Master would like to see you in the library as soon as the principal people are gone."

"Very well," said Archie, a little surprised; but he made no haste to obey his father's call. There were a few more dances after the great people were gone, and Miss Eliza had made three or four ineffectual starts before she could collect her party together, who were the last to go. "Indeed, Mr. Archie," she said, "you will just be worn off your feet hunting up these wild lassies for me. For the moment you've found one, there's a new waltz started, and the other three are on the floor. And when they've done, Helen's off again just to have a last turn, and there's nothing left for it that I can see but for you and me to perform a *pas seul* to frighten them all away.—Here they are at last, the whole four, which is all that can be squeezed into Alick Chalmers's coach, whatever we do. And the lads must just walk, it will do them good after the three or four suppers they've had. And it has been a beautiful ball. I see your mammaw and papaw have stolen away, which I'm not surprised at, considering how late it is. You will say good-night to them for me, and many thanks for a delightful evening. And ye must all come up to your tea to-morrow and talk it over. Good-night—and good-night."

Eddy was at the carriage-door also, superintending with much laughter the packing in of the five ladies in their ball-dresses into Alick's fly. All the dignified and ceremonious leave-takings

were over—this was pure light-hearted fun and frolic. While Miss Eliza's four young ladies were still waving their handkerchiefs from the windows of the coach as it disappeared into the darkness, and “the boys,” an equal number of them, four young men, were buttoning their coats and lighting their cigars, the butler appeared again. Once more he touched Archie on the shoulder, this time with more solemnity than ever. “Mr. Archibald,” he said, “the Master is waiting for you in the library. You're to go to him without another moment's delay.”

“What have you been doing, Rowland—are you going to get a wigging?” said Eddy. “Thank heaven,” he added with a yawn, “my governor's several hundred miles away.”

Archie did not make any reply: but he was not at that moment in any fear of a wigging. Lady Jean's gracious words, and the fun of Miss Eliza's good-humoured party, had brought warmth and confidence to his heart. There could be nothing to be laid to his charge to-night. He knew that he had done his duties well, better than ever before. He had been careful of everybody's comfort, emancipating himself by that thought from his native shyness and fear of putting himself forward. Perhaps his father meant to say something kind to him, to express some satisfaction. It was with this feeling of confidence and ease, a feeling so unusual to him, and even with a little pleasurable sense of expectation, that Archie turned the handle of the library-door.

#### CHAPTER XXXIV

ARCHIE had not remarked at all the incident which had startled Johnson, and which Eddy Saumarez, alone at present among the relies of the supper, and making a final meal with considerable appetite, was going over and over in his eager and fertile mind, trying to make out its meaning, and in what way it could affect himself, and on the course he ought to pursue. The man in the overcoat, closely buttoned up, coming suddenly out of the cold outside to the lighted and dazzling ball-room, with his pale face and startled air, was as a picture to the mind of Eddy, full of innumerable suggestions and possible fate: but it would have conveyed no idea at all to the intelligence of Archie even had he perceived it. Somebody about business; if not, as was most likely, some invited guest who had not caught the boat, or had been otherwise detained on the way, was all the son of the house would have thought of. Somebody about business did not mean much to Archie. It could have, he would have been quite sure, nothing whatever to do with him.

The hall in which the dancing took place was separated from the great door by a vestibule and inner door, chiefly made of glass, and half-covered by heavy curtains. The stranger, when

he jumped from the dogcart which had brought him round the loch, a long detour, had pushed into the vestibule, finding it open and no servants visible. There had been a general withdrawal both of the servants of the house and the many strange footmen, who had attended the guests, to the servants' hall, where a supper was going on, quite as merry, and not much less luxurious, than the other supper in the dining-room : and at this moment there was nobody about to direct the visitor. He had accordingly, his business being urgent, opened the glass door, to find himself in the ball-room, as has been already described. He stood there much surprised, looking round him for some one who could direct him to the master of the house. And, as luck would have it, the master of the house himself was the first to perceive this curious apparition in the midst of his guests. At that end of the hall none of the usual loiterers were standing about. They were all at the other end and along the upper sides of the ball-room, which were free from those draughts which, as the elder people confided to each other, can never be quite shut out from a room so close to the open air. Mr. Rowland made his way through the dancers, dodging here and there a quickly gyrating pair, with a smile upon his face, towards the man in the greatcoat, who stood helplessly at the door not knowing what to do. He held out his cordial hand to him as if he had been the most welcome of visitors. "I don't remember your face," he said, "excuse me ; and you're very late : but the fun, as you see, is still going on."

The new-comer stared at him, with his lips apart.

" You are Mr. Rowland," he said.

" Well, yes, naturally," said the good-humoured host, with a laugh ; " it appears you don't know me any more than I know you."

" I'm from the Bank of Scotland—the Glasgow branch," said the stranger. " I have come, if you please, with a private communication from the manager, very important. If I could speak a word to you by yourself—"

" The Bank of Scotland ! Then you have not come to the ball ?" said Rowland.

The new-comer looked round with a glance of admiration and awe. He was a young man, and he thought it a scene of enchantment, though his Scotch pride was too great to permit any desire to intrude himself into that dazzling assembly. He drew himself up a little and replied, " I have nothing to do with the ball. I knew nothing about it. I have driven round the head of the loch, a very long road ; and I've no prospect but to spend the whole night that way, getting back. Ten minutes, sir, if you can give it me, will be enough for what I have to say."

" Come this way," said Rowland, drawing back the curtain that covered the library-door. He had preferred to keep his sanctuary uninvaded by the visitors, to whom the rest of the house had been thrown open. He stirred the fire in the grate,

which was burning low, and turned up higher the subdued light of the lamp.

"Sit down there," he said, "and get warm ; and tell me what this business is that has brought you so far on a cold night. I suppose you missed the boat ?"

"I just missed it by two minutes, so there was nothing to do but to drive ; if I had known that there was a ball, I think I should have stayed on the other side till the morning, whatever the manager said."

"Oh, never mind that," said Rowland, with a genial laugh. "Dancing's not much in my line—a little business will be a diversion. What is it ? The Bank of Scotland has not broke, I hope, nor the Bank of England either. Banks have no great reputation, I'm afraid, in these parts."

"The Bank of Scotland, sir, is not like your Glasgow Banks," said the visitor, with some severity, for he was an east country man. He paused a little, and then he took from the breast-pocket of his overcoat a case, and from that a piece of paper. "Will you tell me if this is your signature ?" he said.

It was a cheque for a thousand pounds—a cheque crumpled and refolded in diverse ways, as if it had already passed through several hands. Rowland took it with great surprise, and held it to the light.

"My signature ?" he said.

It was mere bewilderment, not intuition, which kept him silent as he examined the writing ; and then there sprang a sudden flutter and dart of anguish through his heart, which he neither understood nor could account for.

"It looks like my signature—why do you ask such a question ?"

He said this, scarcely knowing why, to gain time : though he could not have told why he wanted to gain time.

"God be thanked !" said the stranger. "You lift a load from my mind. It was paid yesterday by one of our young clerks ; but our attention was not called to it till to-day. On comparing it with your usual signature, we felt a doubt ; and the cheque itself was unlike you. It was not crossed—it was drawn to nobody's order ; and it's a considerable sum, Mr. Rowland—nothing to you—but to most people a considerable sum. If you say it's all right, you will lift a load from my mind. It was young Farquhar that paid it—a fine young fellow. And his career would be spoiled——"

These words came in a sort of strange mist to Rowland's mind. He was standing all the time with the cheque in his hands, holding it to the light. Everything external was in a mist to him, both what he saw and what he heard. The very cheque, with that signature "James Rowland" sprawling on it as his own signature sprawled, seemed to float in the air. But within his mind, everything was acute and clear—a great anguish rending him as with a serpent's fangs—a dart through

all his veins, dull in his heart like a stone, violent in his head, as if all the blood had gone there to throb and knell in his ears, and beat like a hammer in his temples. All the time he was standing with his back to the ill-omened messenger, holding the cheque as if he were examining it, in his hands.

His voice, when he spoke, had a dull and thick sound, and he did not turn round, but remained as if fixed in that position, with the cheque stretched out in both his hands, and his head bent to get the light upon it.

"I needn't trouble you any more," he said; "the cheque's—all right. It was drawn for a special purpose; it is nothing to me, as you say."

Here he broke into a hoarse laugh. "Nothing to me! What's a thousand pounds in comparison with—. You can relieve your friend, young Farquhar's mind. Young Farquhar, is that his name? But he ought to be more careful. That's a large sum to pay to bearer over the counter without any guarantee. But he did quite right—quite right—my name's enough for many a thousand pounds." He moved from where he was standing to ring the bell, but did not turn round. Then he went back to the lamp and pushed the shade lower down.

"I'll keep the cheque," he said, "to remind me not to do such a thing again. Saunders, will you take this gentleman into the dining-room, and see that he has some supper before he goes. I don't know your name," he added, turning upon the stranger and putting out his hand, "but I highly approve your energy in coming, and I'll take care to say so to the directors."

"My name is Fergusson—and I'm very glad of your approval, Mr. Rowland: and the night journey will be nothing, for I am going back with a light heart."

"Yes, yes," said Rowland, "on account of young Farquhar: but you should tell him to be careful. Take a good supper, and then you're less likely to catch cold. You'll excuse me entrusting you to my butler, for you see for yourself that to-night—"

"I am only grieved I troubled you," said the bank clerk.

"No, no, nothing of the sort—and mind, Saunders, that Mr. Fergusson has a good glass of wine."

He waited until they were gone, and then he dropped heavily into a chair. He had no doubt, none whatever—not for a moment. Who could have done it but one? He took out that fatal scrap of paper again, and laid it out before him on the table in the intense light. It was very like his signature. He would have himself been taken in, had that been possible. Some of the lines were laboured, while his were merely a dash; but it was very like—so like, he thought, that no new hand could have done it, no one uninstructed. He might himself have been taken in, had he not known, as the bank people did, that he never drew a cheque like that—a cheque with no protection—drawn to bearer, not crossed, nothing to ensure its

safety. He smiled a little at the ridiculous thought that he could have been capable of doing that—then suddenly flung himself down upon the table, covering his face with his hands.

Oh, pain intolerable ! oh, anguish not to be shaken off ! His boy—Mary's son, who had her eyes—his heir, his successor, the only one to continue his name. Oh burning, gnawing, living pang, that went through and through him like a spear made not of steel, but of fire ! He writhed upon it, as we all do in our time, feeling each sharp edge, as well as the fiery point that pins us helpless to the earth. What was Prometheus upon his rock, of whom the ancients raved—a trifler, a nothing, in comparison with the father, who had just been persuaded of the guilt of his only son.

And all the time the music was sounding outside the door, the sound of the light feet going and coming in rhythmic waves, the confused hum of voices and laughter. The boy who had put this spear into his father's heart was there, enjoying it all. Rowland had been pleased to see that Archie was enjoying it. He had said to himself that the boy was no such cub after all ; that perhaps that failure of his about his comrade might be explained ; that he might have been dazzled by the possession of money, and too completely unused to it to understand the spending of it. He might have been afraid to give what was wanted, fearing that he would be blamed. There must be some reason. He had persuaded himself that this must be the case in the sensation of a certain pride in his children, which the sight of them among the others had produced.

And now, and now !—James Rowland had gone through the usual experiences of man—he had known sorrow, and he had known the pangs of repentance. He had not always been satisfied with himself, and he had been disappointed in others from time to time. But what were all these miseries to this ?

As he lay there with his face hidden, a hand was suddenly laid upon his shoulder. “James—what is the matter, what is the matter ?” his wife said.

He turned at first from her, with a thought that she was the last person who should hear—she who was not the mother, who had nothing to do with the boy ; and then he turned towards her : for was not she bound to be his own comforter, to help him in everything ? He raised himself up slowly, and lifted his face from his hands, which had left the mark of their pressure upon his ashy cheeks.

“The matter !” he said ; “the worst is the matter !—the worst that can happen. I am afraid of nothing more in this world !”

“James !” she cried,—then with an attempt to smile—“You are trying to frighten me. What is it ? A man has been here.—Dear James, it is not the loss of—your money ?—for what is that ? We will bear it together, and be just as happy.”

Evelyn's mind, in spite of herself, was moved by accounts in story-books of catastrophes which were announced in this way.

I am not sure that he even heard her suggestion, much less was capable of comprehending the devotion to himself that was in it. He moved his hand to the pink paper which lay stretched upon the table in the full light of the lamp. "Look at that," he said.

She took it up perplexed. A cheque for a thousand pounds, which to Evelyn, unaccustomed to the possession of money, looked, as the bank clerk had said, like a large sum. She looked at it again, turning it over, as if any enlightenment was to be had in that way. Then it occurred to her in the midst of her alarm, that after all her husband's great fortune could not be represented by a cheque for a thousand pounds. "What does it mean?" she said, still holding it vaguely in her hands.

"Can't you see?" He was almost harsh in his impatience, snatching it out of her hand and holding it up to the light. "They were fools to pay it at the bank; and, as for that young Farquhar, I'll— Can't you see? Look there, and there—"

"I don't know what you mean me to see, James. It is a little laboured, not quite like your hand. You must have been tired when you— Ah!" said Evelyn breaking suddenly off, and beginning to examine, fascinated, the terrible document that looked so simple. She looked up in his face, quite pale, her lips dropping apart. "You don't mean me to think—"

"Think? See! look at it; it is forged—that is what it is."

She looked at him, every tint of colour gone from her face, her eyes wide open, her lips trembling. It might have been supposed that she had done it. "Oh, James, James!" she cried in a low voice of terror and dismay. Then there flashed before her eyes a whole panorama of moving scenes: the pale and lowering face of Archie; the lively one of Eddy Saumarez; the disreputable Johnson—all came and went like distracting shadows. In a second she went over a whole picture-gallery of visionary portraits. Her husband looked at her intently, as if to read the name of the culprit in her eyes; but she only repeated, "Oh James, James!" as if this appeal was all that she could say.

"You see it," he said with a sort of exasperated calm. "Though that young Farquhar—confound him, oh, confound him!—" Here he stopped again, as if the thought were too much. "He's got a father and mother now, no doubt, who can trust him with everything they've got; who look forward to his becoming a director of the bank; whom he goes home to every night self-conceited—Oh, confound them every one!"

"James," she said, laying her hand doubtfully again upon his shoulder, "is it Mr. Farquhar who has got your money? Is it—? Whom do you—suspect?"

He broke out into a loud, harsh laugh. "I haven't much choice, have I?" he said, "there are not many that could have done it. There is only one, so far as I can judge. He's been

set on horseback, and he's ridden to the devil ; and to make it up—though God knows how it's gone, for he has nothing to show for it—he puts his father under a forced contribution—that's about what it is."

"You mean Archie !—no, no, no," cried Evelyn ; "it is not Archie—it is not Archie ! James, you are angry ; you are letting prejudice lead you astray."

"Prejudice—against my only son ! If it had been prejudice in his favour, prejudice to look over his faults, to think him better than he is—"

"No, no, no," said Evelyn, "that is not your way. You want perfection, and you can't bear not to have it, James. There is nothing—nothing vicious about Archie. He must have been vicious to want that money ? No, no, no. I am as sure that you are mistaken as that I'm alive."

He shook his head, but he was a little comforted for the moment. "You can send for him if you are so confident," he said ; and then there came to them in a sudden gust the sound of the music, the movement of the dancers, which made the floor thrill even where they were apart in that room full of trouble : and the horror of the combination brought from Evelyn a cry of pain, as she put up her hands to her face.

"Oh, don't send for him now ! in the middle of all that, where he is doing his best, poor boy—where he has forgotten everything that's been troubling him ;—don't, James, don't for your wife's sake send for the poor boy now—"

"For my wife's sake !—It is you who are my wife, Evelyn."

"If I am, it is not to sweep her influence away, but to help it. Have mercy on her boy ! Oh, James, you have been hard upon him : you are a good man, but you have been hard upon him. Why did you expose him the other day about that money ? There might be a hundred reasons that you never stopped to hear. James, I am in Mary's place ; and what she would have done I am doubly bound to do. Don't ruin her boy. Don't, for God's sake, James, even if your anger is just, destroy her boy !"

He rose up and walked about the room in his way, laughing at intervals that hard, dry, little laugh, which was his signal of distress.

"It shows what you think of me," he said, "that you bid me not to ruin him. What's the meaning of that accursed bit of paper lying there ? It means that I have adopted the lie and the guilt to save him. I have said it was all right—not for his sake—but to save an open shame."

"Ah, James ! for his sake too."

He put his arm round her, and bent his head down upon her shoulder for a moment. She felt his heart beating like a loud, hard piece of machinery, thumping and labouring in his breast ; and she thought she divined the pain that was in him, forcing all his organs into such fierce movement. And so she did, in

fact ; but who can altogether understand the bitterness in another's heart ?

He sat down again after a while, and said again—

"Send for him—he must answer for himself."

"I will have to go and see to the people who are leaving, James ; you ought to come too."

"I can't, it is impossible."

"Then Archie must stay to take your place. He has done very well, as well as any boy could have done. He must back me up, and help me to see all the people away."

Rowland made a gesture of disgust at the people, the music, the gaiety, the whole brilliant, delightful entertainment which he had devised so splendidly, and only an hour or two ago enjoyed so intensely. He could not bear the thought, much less the sight of it now. He remained alone while Evelyn went back to go through the final proceedings—to shake hands with the guests, and receive their acknowledgments. He sat and listened to the music and the sound of the feet keeping time, and the driving up of the carriages outside, and the commotions of the departure. Twice in his impatience, as the reader has seen, he rang for the butler, who was dispensing hospitality on a scale little inferior to that of his master, and who was much annoyed to be disturbed. Saunders took one message after another to Archie, as has been seen, without very much effect. The butler's feelings were all with the young man. He too was of opinion, from his master's aspect and a something in the air which the inferior members of a household are quick to perceive, that there was "a wiggling" in store for Archie ; and everybody in the servants' hall instinctively took Archie's side, and agreed with Saunders that to keep out of the governor's way as long as he could, was very natural on the part of the young man. Several of them wondered whether the man in the topcoat, who had supper punctually served to him in the dining-room, was the man who had made the row, an opinion to which Mr. Saunders himself privately inclined. But the opinion of these functionaries did not reach to Mr. Rowland in his library. He sat and listened to all the voices and counted the carriages as they rolled away. There could be but few remaining when he sent the last message to Archie. But when Saunders went out of the library with his errand, he met Mrs. Rowland coming in. She had stolen away from Miss Eliza and her vigorous group of dancers. Evelyn's heart was sick too, in dismal expectation of the interview to come. She knew beforehand how it would be. Rowland would dash the accusation in his son's face, taking everything for granted, while Archie would either retire in sullen offence, or deny violently with as little reason or moderation as his father. They would meet like the clash of angry waves, neither making the smallest impression on the other ; and then they would drift afloat with what she felt to be an irremediable wrong between them, something far more grave

than had ever appeared on the stormy horizon before. And what could Evelyn do, she who would so fain have taken all the trouble upon her shoulders, and saved them both? Oh no, there was no such luck in store for her! She could not save her husband from committing himself to a great accusation, or Archie from violent rebellion and denial. If he took it too calmly, Evelyn felt that even her own faith in him would fail, and if he were violent, it would make the breach with his father all the greater. She went and stood by her husband's side, putting her hand upon his arm as he sat at the table with the shade of the lamp raised, and the light full upon his angry face, waiting till his son should come.

And Archie came in so unconscious, almost self-satisfied, expecting a little approbation, and to find that his exertions had been appreciated! There was a half smile on his mouth which changed the expression of a face so often lowering and heavy with anticipation of evil. He feared no evil this night. His eyes were limpid and blue, without a cloud, though with a faint mist of boyish drowsiness in them just coming over the brightness of excitement. He was excited still, but a little sleepy, the call upon him being almost over: and it was nearly four o'clock in the morning, a sufficient reason for fatigue. "Did you want me, father?" he said, in his fresh, boyish voice. Evelyn stood by her husband's side, holding his arm with a firm significant pressure. She gave one look at the lad who stood there, with his half smile, fearing no one, and then, with a sick heart, turned her face away.

"Yes, sir, I wanted you. I have been waiting for you here for hours," Rowland said.

Archie was startled by this unexpected tone. The smile went away from his mouth. His eyes woke up from that mist of coming slumber and looked a little anxious, a little wondering, ready to be defiant, in his father's face.

Rowland took up the piece of paper that lay on the table in the fierce white light of the lamp. Archie had clearly perceived it was a cheque, but what it could be for he did not imagine. His father took it up, and once more flung it at him as he had done so often. "Look at that," in a voice of thunder, "and tell me what it means!" he cried.

### CHAPTER XXXV

"WHAT is the meaning of it?" said Archie. He was so tired and pleased and sleepy, that he did not even now feel sure that anything was wrong. A faint idea struck his mind that his father, though he did not look amiable, might yet be making him another present, as he had done before. He caught it this time as it whirled towards him, and looked at it puzzled, but

without any alarm. "It is a cheque," he said, looking up from it with again that vague, slumberous smile creeping about the corners of his mouth.

"Is that all you have to say?"

"What should I say?" asked the young man. "Is it—another present you are making me?—but it's a great sum," he added, waking up more and more, "it can't be that."

He was so simple as he stood, almost so childish, taking the awful missive, of the nature of which he had no understanding, which meant ruin, shame, everything that was dreadful, into his hand so innocently, that there came from the breast of the spectator standing by—the only being whom the boy feared—a suppressed but irrestrainable groan of emotion. Yet Evelyn felt that to her husband his son's ignorance meant nothing but acting, a consummate deceit, got up beforehand, the result of guilty expectation, not of innocent ignorance.

"Mind, how you drive me wild!" Rowland said hoarsely. "I give you yet a place of repentance. For your mother's sake, and for my wife's sake, who is not your mother—own to it like a man even now—and I'll forgive you yet."

Archie's unconsciousness was almost foolish, as he stood there with the thing in his hand. Evelyn, trembling from head to foot in her own impatience and anxiety, could scarcely bear it. "Oh speak, speak!" she cried under her breath.

"Own to what?" the boy said. "A place of repentance—for what?" His consternation and amazement were clear enough; only to his father they seemed the deepest deceit.

"Down upon your knees!" he cried, springing to his feet. "Do you know what that means?—not mere cheating of your father, which perhaps was all you thought of; it means the ruin of your whole life; it means penal servitude—a little while ago it meant death. Go down on your knees and ask my pardon. I will never trust you again, nor will I ever have a happy moment, knowing what you are; but I will forgive you, as far as the world is concerned, and hide your shame."

Evelyn, whom her husband had thrown off in his hurried movement, stood wringing her hands, her tears dropping upon them, her countenance convulsed with terror and pity. "Oh speak to him, Archie, tell him, tell him!" she said.

Then the poor young fellow came fully to life, though even now he did not quite understand what it was he was accused of. "I don't know what you mean," he said: "for there is nothing in the world that can mean penal servitude to me. You are mad, I think, father. I have done nothing to ruin my life.—Me! what could I have done—what has been in my power? If I were as bad in nature as you think me—what, what has been in my power?"

"Archie," said Rowland, recovering his composure by a great effort; "I want no useless talk. Let's understand all that as said. Self-defence is out of the question. If you will tell me as

humblly as you can what led you to such a crime as forgery, perhaps—God forgive you, I'll try to think the best—thinking less of it because it was your father—”

“Forgery!” cried Archie with a great shout, as if to earth and heaven.

“You need not proclaim your shame and mine—Forgery. What is the money to me? I would rather than ten thousand pounds, than all I have in the world, that you had come to me and told me—oh, any story you pleased—if it were gambling, if it were some wretched woman—whatever it was. ‘Man,’ cried the father in his anguish, “you are my only son. It was my fault, perhaps, that I was disappointed in you. But if you had come to me and said, ‘I have been a fool, I have need of a thousand pounds to clear me of my folly,’—do you think I would have refused? I might have been angry then—not knowing what was in store—but if I know myself, I would not have been hard upon you. I would have thought you were but young—I would have felt you were like your mother. God forgive you, boy, you’re like your mother there where you stand, a felon, a criminal, subject to the law. And my only son, my only son !”

He turned away with a loud sob, that came from his heart like the report of a pistol, and throwing himself in his chair, covered his face with his hands.

“A felon and a criminal,” said Archie, in his turn half mad with passion, and having made a dozen efforts to break in. “Oh, I knew you hated me; but I never thought it would go so far.—Me a felon—me subject to the law! It’s just a damned cursed lie!” cried the boy, tears of rage in his eyes. “Ay! I never swore in my life, but I’ll swear now. It’s a damned lie! It’s a cursed lie! Oh, publish it to the whole world, if you like; what do I care? it’s all over between you and me. You may call me your son if you like, but no more will I call you father. Oh, get a trumpet and tell it all over the world, and see if one will believe you that ever knew Archie Rowland. Shame!” cried the lad; “father! do you not think shame to say it? do you not think shame?”

The innocent face was gone—the look, that almost seemed like imbecility in its unawakened ignorance. His features were distorted and quivering with fury, his eyes full of great hot tears of pain, which splashed upon that paper in his hand in round circles, making the boy’s passion wilder still with the shame that he had been made to cry like a girl! But these fierce drops were not the easy tears of a child. He flung the cheque upon the table with a laugh that was more painful still.

“Put it up in a frame,” he said, “in your hall, or in the bank, or where folk can see it best; and write on it, ‘Forged by Archie Rowland.’ And send your policeman out to take me, and bring me to trial, and get me condemned. You’re a rich, rich man,

and maybe you will be able to do it : for there's nobody will believe that you invented all that to ruin your son, your only son. Oh, what grand words to say ! Or maybe it was *her* invention ! " cried Archie, as a movement caught his ear, which drew his wild eyes to Evelyn. He stood staring at her for a moment in silence. " It would not be so unnatural if it were her invention," he said.

There was a moment of awful silence—for great though the passion was in Rowland's accusation, the fury of the unjustly accused was greater. It was a storm against which no lesser sentiment could stand. The slight untrained figure of the lad rose to strange might and force, no softness in it or pliancy. He stood fiercely at bay, like a wild animal, panting for breath. And the father made no reply. He sat staring, silenced by the response, which was a kind of fiercer echo of his own passion.

" You have nothing to say, it appears," said Archie, with quick breathing, " and I will say nothing. I will go to the place I was brought up in. I will not run away. And then ye can send your warrant, or whatever you call it, to arrest me. I will bide the worst you can do. Not a step will I move till you send to take me. You will find me there night or day. Good-bye to ye," he said abruptly. A momentary wavering, so slight that it was scarcely perceptible, moved him, one of those instantaneous impulses which sometimes change the whole character of life—a temptation he thought it—to cry " father ! father," to appeal against this unimaginable wrong. But he crushed it on the threshold of his mind, and turned to the door.

" Archie !" cried Evelyn in despair, rushing after him. " Archie ! I believe every word you say."

He took no notice of her, nor of the hand with which she grasped his sleeve, but pausing, looked round for a moment at his father, then he flung open the door, disdaining even to close it after him, and walked quickly away.

" James !—for God's sake go after him, stop him. James ! James ! for the love of God——"

" Ye mean the devil !" said Rowland, quickly, " that put all that into his head."

He rose up and took the cheque from the table, but, perceiving the stain of the tear, threw it down again, as if it had stung him. There are some things that flesh and blood cannot bear, and the great blot of moisture upon that guilty paper was one of them. It all but unmanned this angry father. " Put that thing away, lock it up, put it out of my sight," he said, with a quivering in his throat.

He had no doubt of his son's guilt. He had known other cases in which a fury of injured innocence had been the best way of meeting an accusation. And yet there was something in Archie's passion which, while it roused his own, penetrated him with another strange contradictory feeling—was it almost approval, of the bearing of the boy ? But not on so slight an

argument as that was he shaken in his foregone conclusion. He walked up and down the room, curiously made into a sort of public, comfortless, unprotected place by the flinging open of the door, and presently began to speak, flinging broken sentences from him. The hall, with its decorations, the waxed and shining floor, with a broken flower, a fallen card, a scrap of ribbon, dropped upon it here and there, that air of the banquet-hall deserted which is always so suggestive, formed the background to his moving figure. And even Evelyn, in her absorption in the wild tragic excitement of this domestic drama, did not think of the stealthy servants moving about, and the eager ears so intent upon picking up some indication of what the trouble might be.

"He knows very well," said Rowland. "Oh, he knows very well that I will never have him arrested or do anything to disgrace my own name. It's cheap, cheap, all that bravado about waiting till I send to take him ; he might wait till doomsday, as he well knows. Hold your tongue, Evelyn. It's well your part to defend him, when he had the grace to say it was your invention."

"Poor boy, poor boy ! he did not know what he was saying."

"Are you so sure of that ? He knew what he was saying, every word. He's a bold hand—it's a superior way when the artist can do it—I've seen the thing before. Injured pride, and virtue—oh, virtue rampant ! That never had a thought, nor could understand what wickedness meant. I have seen it before. And cheap, cheap all yon about waiting till I sent the policeman, when he knows I would not expose my name, not for more than he's worth a thousand times over. Worth ! he's worth nothing ; and my name, my name that is known over two continents—and more ! That's what you would call irony, isn't it ?" said Rowland, with his harsh laugh. "Irony ! I'm not a man of much reading, but I've seen it in books. Irony !—a name known over half the world ; though, perhaps, I shouldn't be the man to say it. And forged ! forged by the man's own son that made it."

"James, for God's sake ! It was not Archie. I believe every word he said."

"That the whole thing was your invention ?" said Rowland. "That's what he said ; the rest was rubbish, I remember that. And you believe every word ? You are a fool, like most women—and many men too. That old sage, as ye call him, was right, though people cry out. Mostly fools ! It was said before him though. Men walk in a vain show, and disquiet themselves in vain. They lay up riches, and know not who is to gather them. Was there ever such a fool as me to keep thinking of my boy, my little callant, as I thought, and never once to remember that he was growing up into a low-lived lout all the time."

"Archie is not so," said Evelyn. "He is not so ; his faults

are on the outside. He did not do this. I never believed he did it. James, you will never have been a fool till now if you let the boy go."

"Bah! he has no intention of going. You take the like of that in earnest. He will go to his bed and sleep it off, and then —to-morrow's a new day. I am dead-tired myself," said Rowland, stretching his arms; "as tired as a dog. I'll sleep till one, though I've had enough to murder sleep. No, no, he'll not go; yon's all cheap, cheap, because he knows I will do nothing against him. You are a fine creature, Evelyn, but you are no wiser than the rest. Good-night, my dear, I am going to bed."

"Without a word of comfort to him, James?"

"Comfort! he wants no comfort. And if he did," said Rowland with a smile of misery, "it would be hard to come to me for it, who have none to give. If you know anybody that has that commodity to part with, send them to that boy's father,—send them to the man that has had the heart taken out of him. I am going to my bed,"

He went slowly up-stairs, and then, for the first time, Evelyn saw the butler, Saunders, within hearing, though busily employed, with one or two subordinates, in putting out the lights and closing the shutters. She watched her husband, with his slow, unelastic step, going one by one up the long flight of steps. He had never learned to subdue his energetic step, and take them less than two together before. She was almost glad to see those signs of exhaustion. The fervour of his passion had dropped. He would, perhaps, turn aside, she thought, to Archie's room, and would understand his son, and the two might meet heart to heart at last.

Evelyn waited a long time, shivering and chill in those dismal hours of the morning. She saw the servants conclude their work and go away unwillingly to their rest. She sat down in the library, with the room open to the dark, desolated hall, in which only a faint light was left burning, and listened to all the creakings and rustlings that seemed to run through the still and sleeping house. No one came. Had his father, after all, gone to his door and made peace? Had the tired boy fallen asleep in spite of himself? Had it all been vapouring, as James said? She waited in her ball dress, with a rough woollen shawl, the first she could find, wrapped about her; and the lamp, burning with a steady, monotonous light, throwing a lengthened gleam upon the dark curtains of the glass door.

It had all been almost as she thought. Rowland had paused, his feet had almost carried him, his heart, yearning, had almost forced him to Archie's room to make a last appeal, perhaps to listen, perhaps to understand. But he would not allow himself to be moved by impulse, and turned heavily in the other direction to his own room, where he fell, as he had prophesied, heavily asleep. And Archie, tired beyond description, his very

passion unable to resist the creeping languor in his brain, had almost gone to sleep too, leaning his head against the bed, in the attitude in which he had thrown himself down in order that he might try to understand this new mystery. But in this he was not successful, for after a minute or two, the sound of the heavy step, which was his father's, startled him, and he became more wide-awake than ever, listening with a beating heart, wondering would he come. He heard the pause, and wondered more and more. When Rowland took the other direction, Archie sprang to his feet and began hurriedly to change his dress. It took him a considerable time to do this, for his fingers were trembling, and his whole being shaken. He had to pull everything out of his drawers to find the old shabby coat which he had worn when he first came to Rosmore. The room looked as if it had been scattered in scorn or frenzy with everything he possessed. But that was not Archie's meaning. He got his old suit at last, and put it on, tossing his evening clothes into a corner. He took off the watch his father had given him, and denuded himself of everything that had come to him since Rowland returned home. Poor Archie, his humiliation was complete. The old clothes seemed to bring back the old mien, and it was the lad of the Sauchiehall Road, and not the young gentleman of Rosmore, who, seeing that the lights were out and all the house silent, stepped out of the chaos of his desolated bedchamber and took his way down-stairs.

There was a jar upon the great staircase, the sound thrilling through the silence, of a slip upon some hardened plank, and Evelyn awoke with a start from a troubled doze. She drew her shawl close round her, for it was very cold, the coldest moment of the night just before dawn. She had drawn the curtain half over the library-door, that the light might not betray her, and it was only by the dim rays of the night lamp in the hall that she could distinguish the dark figure going softly towards the door. He had his hand upon it when she stole out quietly and caught his arm in her hands.

"Archie! where are you going? You are not going out at this hour of the night?"

"Is it you, Mrs. Rowland?" he said with a start. "If I had known that anybody was up, I should not have come this way."

"Thank God you did not know. Archie, where are you going out of your father's house?"

"My father's house!" he said with a faint laugh. "But why go over it again? you were there, and you heard the whole."

"And you heard me?"

"You! I was not thinking of you," he said with a contempt which was purely matter-of-fact and natural, meaning no offence.

"Nevertheless you heard what I said."

He paused a little and then said, "Yes, I suppose I did. I remember something, but what does all that matter now?"

"It matters having a friend always at hand, to note everything. Oh, my boy, don't go. Stay and work it out—stay and prove who has done it. Archie, take my advice."

"Why should I, Mrs. Rowland? I have always thought you were my enemy."

"Very falsely, very falsely!" she cried. "Archie, I promised to your mother I would do all to you that a woman who was not your mother could do."

"You promised to my mother! What do you know about my mother? It is getting late and I should be on the road: let me go."

She was holding his arm with both her hands. And she was not his enemy. His heart was charged with wrath, and grievous against her, but he would not think she was his enemy any more—and his mother—the name startled him, and there was something in the close contact with this beautiful lady and the pressure of her hands, that gave Archie a bewildered new sensation in the midst of his rage and misery. The very sense of her superiority—that superiority that had been so humiliating, so sore a subject, and her beauty which he had never appreciated, but which somehow came in to amaze yet touch him, as with the deep curves round her anxious eyes, pale with watching and trouble, she held him and kept him back on the threshold of the friendless world, all evident in the surprise which penetrated through Archie's wretchedness. Was it the promise of something better at the bottom of the deepest wrong of them all?

"I don't know what you mean—about my mother—" he said.

"I promised her," said Evelyn, the tears dropping from her eyes, "when I first caught sight of this house, which should have been hers—I promised her, that you should be cared for, as if she were here."

"What was that!" he said, "something touched me—what was that? Who is it? Is there some one playing tricks here?"

He worked himself out of her grasp, turning to the other side, where there was no one or anything to be seen. It was the darkest hour of the night, and the coldest and most dreary, though indeed, it was already morning, and in many a humble house about the inhabitants were already awake and stirring. But there was a stillness in the deserted hall, as if some one had died there, and all the revellers had fled from the deserted place. He searched about the side of the hall, peering and groping in the feeble miserable light, but came back to where Evelyn stood, coming close to her, shivering, with a scared and blanched face.

"Somebody touched me, on my shoulder," he said in a very low voice.

"You have had no sleep. Your nerves are excited. Go back, go back, my poor boy, to your bed and sleep."

"No, never when that has been said against me—never—if there was not another house in the world."

"Archie, my dear, we must keep our sense and our heads clear. Whoever has done it, must know and be on the watch to escape, and you must see that you must be cleared : it must be made quite plain as the light of day."

"I will never be cleared," he said, shaking his head. "My father will never say that he was wrong, and how should I find out? I am not clever to be a detective. There are things that are never found out. No, there's no light of day for me. Aunt Jean will take me in, and I will go to the foundry and work, as he did. But I will never be the man he was," the boy said with a sort of forlorn pride in the father who had thrown him off. "Mark you, I think maybe you are good as well as bonnie, and far better than the like of us. If I had known sooner, it might have been different. Let me go."

"Oh, boy, boy ! you must be cleared, and you won't stay and do it," she cried, grasping his arm again.

He unloosed her hands with a certain roughness yet tenderness. "Let me go," he said. "I will go, there is nobody on earth that can stop me." He undid the iron bar that held the door with fierce haste, paying no attention to her pleadings, and flung the big door open, letting in the chill morning air, which sped like a messenger unseen swiftly through the hall and up the stairs, and driving Mrs. Rowland back with a chill that went to her heart.

Archie stepped out into the dark world. Over the mouth of the loch where the current of the great river swept its waters in, there was a faint trembling of whiteness, which meant a new day. He did not feel the cold or any shock from it, but instead of hurrying forth as might have been looked for, lingered, standing outside a moment, with his face turned towards that lightness in the east. Evelyn wrapped her shawl more closely round her and followed him, standing upon the step of the door to make a last effort. But he paid no attention to what she said. He stood lingering on the gravel absorbed in his own thoughts. Then he came up to her again close, as if he had for the first time remarked her presence. "Do you think," he said, "it could be *her*, to give me heart?" and then without waiting for a reply, he turned away.

Cold and startled and shivering, Evelyn watched his retiring figure till it was lost in the darkness, and then closed the door, with a heart that was fluttering and sick in her breast. He had said many strange things--things which almost made it possible that he was not so innocent as she thought, and yet he was innocent, he must be innocent ! She crossed the dark hall with a tremor in her weariness and exhaustion. It needed not the darkness to veil an ethereal spirit. Had Mary been there?

## CHAPTER XXXVI

NOT a word was said of Archie in the house of Rosmore until the tired and still sleepy party assembled to breakfast. Evelyn, who had not closed her eyes till daylight, had slept late, and had not been disturbed; and her husband had no opportunity of questioning her, had he been disposed, until they met at the breakfast-table. The rest of the party were all assembled when she came in—Rowland himself invisible behind his newspaper, and taking no notice, while the others were talking as gaily as usual, without any sign of being moved by any knowledge of a catastrophe. Eddy Saumarez indeed had dark lines under his eyes, but his talk was endless as ever. He gave Mrs. Rowland a quick and keen look of investigation as she came in, but Eddy was the last person in her thoughts, and she did not even observe the glance. The conversation, in due course of the table, ran on without much interruption from the strangers, who dropped in one by one, and to whom the mistress of the house gave all her care.

"Archie was magnificent with Lady Jean," said Eddy. "I never saw anything so good as his bow. He put his feet together like a French dandy of the last century. We've lost the art in our degenerate days."

"Oh," said Marion, "that was nothing wonderful, for it was a Frenchman that we got our dancing from, Archie and me. He used to play a little fiddle and caper about. Some people thought he was old-fashioned—the MacColls—but they were just as ignorant! He taught me that way of doing my steps, you know"—and Marion sprang up, lifting a fold of her dress to exhibit a neat foot pointed in a manner which presumably her former partner had admired.

"Oh yes, I know—you danced young Cameron's heart away. As for mine, it is well known I have got none. But did you see him in the reel? By Jove, he sprang a foot from the floor."

"Who is him?" said Rosamond—"Mr. Rowland or Mr. Cameron—you might make your descriptions more clear."

"Oh, Archie! No. He wanted lightness perhaps a little in the waltzes, but the reels he performed like one to the manner born."

"Oh, I don't know," said Marion, "that he was more born to one than to the other. We've danced very few reels, if that is what you mean. Waltzes and polkas, and so forth, is what we were learned to dance—just like other people. But it is true that Archie was never so good at it as—"

Marion paused with a feeling of her stepmother's eyes upon her, though indeed Mrs. Rowland was far too much occupied by the other guests, even had her mind been less troubled, to have any perception of the chatter going on at her side.

"It is savage," said Rosamond, "but it has a kind of sense in it ; whereas going round and round is delirious, but it has none. One enjoys dancing very much, but one is rather ashamed of it after it is over. Why should one spend hours doing nothing but go round and round ? When you look on and don't dance, it is silly beyond anything in the world."

"I dare say the wallflowers think so," said Eddy. "But they would not if they could get partners."

"That is the worst of it," said Rosamond reflectively. "Probably they are far the nicest people in the room. I thought last night we were all like the little figures on the barrel-organ that used to play under our nursery windows, going round and round till it made one giddy to see them. And to think that people with other things in their minds should go like that a whole evening ; and all the trouble that was taken to prepare for them, and all the trouble to make things rational again, and only know perhaps in the midst of all the nonsense—"

"What—in the midst of all the nonsense, Miss Saumarez ?" said Mr. Rowland, suddenly laying down his paper, which had much the effect of a gun suddenly fired into the midst of them, for it was very rarely that he interfered in the conversation of the young members of the party. His face, which always had a weather-beaten tone, was flushed and redder than usual, which is the unattractive way in which some middle-aged people show their trouble, instead of the more interesting method of young folk.

"Oh nothing," said Rosamond a little startled, and answering like any shy girl suddenly finding herself called to book. She recovered her courage, however, and continued : "I mean it looks silly to see everybody twirling and twirling as if they had nothing to do or think of, when they must have things to think of, even in the midst of a ball."

Rowland threw down his paper and rose from his seat. "You are about right, however you came about your knowledge," he said, and walking to the window stood with his large back turned towards them, staring out and seeing nothing ; indeed, as the windows of the dining-room looked only into the shrubberies, there was nothing but trees and bushes to see.

"It is not the fashion," said Eddy, "to wear your heart on your sleeve, thank heaven. And society's the best of discipline in that way. When a man's hit, he must blubber out loud before the crowd like a child ; I am always at my funniest when I'm hardest hit—and as for the Governor, Rose, you know when he's bad by the way he laughs at everything. By the way," cried Eddy, "what's become of Rowland, the lazy beggar? doesn't he mean to come down-stairs to-day?"

"Archie was always lazy in the morning," said Marion, "we never could get him up."

"Young Mr. Rowland should have a long allowance," said a lady who had been absorbed in her letters, "for he had double

work last night. He was ubiquitous, finding partners, finding places, doing everything. You should have heard Lady Jean. He fairly won her heart."

"And mine too," cried Lady Marchbanks from the other end of the table, who was known to copy Lady Jean faithfully in all her strongly expressed opinions.

"That would show, according to Saumarez," said a young man laughing, "that to show himself so lively, he must have had something on his mind."

Rowland turned round from the window at which he stood, and gave a keen look at the careless young speaker who had just appeared, then returned to his contemplation of the somewhat gloomy landscape without.

"Are you studying the weather, James?" said Evelyn from her place at the head of the table.

"That's not a subject that repays contemplation in this country, Mrs. Rowland," said Sir John Marchbanks with his mouth full.

"It wants variety, it's always raining : the glass may say what it likes, but you're sure of that."

"The glass," said another gentleman, strolling towards the window to join the laird, "has little effect in this district. But just for the fun of the thing, Rowland, what does it say?"

James Rowland was not a man who wore his heart on his sleeve, but neither had he that super-admirable discipline of society which rouses the spirits to special force in order to conceal a calamity. He turned round upon the inquirer somewhat sharply : "The fun of the thing? I see no fun in the thing. Corn still out on those high-lying fields, and frost in the air, and the glass falling : it's not funny to me."

Nothing was funny to him at that moment, to look at his flushed and clouded face. He had held himself in for some time, but the tension was unbearable. Was Archie coming, and all as usual? was he sulking in his room? was he—terrible question—gone; gone for ever out of his father's house? His trouble took, as in so many middle-aged minds, the form of acute irritation. And yet he did his best to restrain himself.

"Oh, that's true," said the other, somewhat disconcerted. "Perhaps we don't think enough of the poor bodies' bit fields. But they should learn better than to put corn there. You will find no decent farmer doing that."

"Corn's but a delusion at the best, in these days," said a country gentleman with a sigh.

"But if we are going out to take you your luncheons to the hill," cried the pretty Miss Marchbanks, "we must be sure of the weather. Oh, I am not going out upon the hill if it rains, to go over my ankles in every bog."

Rowland had turned from the window and was looking round the table with a faint hope of finding his son there. He had tried to smooth out his troubled countenance, and at this speech

he contrived to smile. "I will go and consult the big glass in the hall for your satisfaction, Miss Marchbanks," he said.

"Oh, do, do ! how kind you are ! and we'll all come too," cried the girl. But he did not wait for this undesirable result. What a relief it was to escape, to get beyond reach of all those inquisitive looks, to reach the shelter of the room which no one invaded. He hid himself behind the heavy curtains and the closed door, only in time to escape the invasion of the light-hearted company, whose voices and footsteps he could hear coming after him. He had purposely refrained from asking any questions about Archie, not willing to betray his uneasiness to the servants. His wife had remained long down-stairs after him, but even with her, who knew everything, he was reluctant to ask any questions ; and she had been asleep when he was roused by the movement in the house to the shining of a new day. He knew nothing—nothing from the time when, with angry despair, he had gone up-stairs and wavered for a moment at Archie's door. All he had wanted then was to pour out upon the boy the bitterness of his heart. But now the snatches of broken sleep which had come to him refreshing him against his will, and the enforced quiet of the night, and the new beginning of the day, had worked their natural effect. A longing came into his mind to dream it all over again, to see if perhaps there might be any fact to support the boy's vehement and impassioned denial. No, no, he said to himself, there could be no proof—none ! Some disgraceful secret must lie beneath. It was not in Archie's nature (which was kind enough—the fool had a good heart and faithful enough to his friends) to have refused to help his old comrade without some reason. Perhaps, Rowland thought, this was to do that—the fool ! he had no sense about money. It might have been for this purpose—a good purpose ; a thing he had himself taunted him for not doing. The perspiration came out in great beads on his brow—a cold dew of pain. Could it be for this that he had made himself a criminal ? or had he not done it at all ? But that was impossible. Who else could have done it ? It would be easy for him whose own handwriting resembled his father's, whose appearance with so large a cheque would have occasioned no suspicion. It had been a little pleasure to Rowland, and warmed his heart with a sensation of the mysterious bond of nature, to find that, though he had nothing to do with his son's education, Archie's handwriting had resembled his. And now the recollection struck him like a sharp blow. And then the son—who could wonder that he came with so large a cheque ? But no, it was not he that had cashed the cheque, for it had been wondered over, and young Farquhar—confound young Farquhar !—no doubt some shady puppy doing well, good as they always are these fellows to contrast with— He had thrown himself into his chair, but now he got up again and walked about the room. That the bank people should be so anxious to cover young Farquhar at the cost of Archie—It was

not that ; he knew there was something wanted to complete the logic of that, but it came to the same thing. To transfix his own heart with ten thousand wounds, to ruin the boy—for what was it but ruin to the boy, whatever came of it, not a trick and frolic as the young fool pretended to think, but ruin, ruin, all the same—for the sake of young Farquhar, to save a little delay in his advancement ! Good Lord ! how disproportioned things were in this life !

He was standing by the fire, idly looking at the calendar on his mantelpiece, which marked the date 25th of October, a date he never forgot, when the door was cautiously opened and Saunders, the butler, came in, closing it again carefully after him. There was something in the man's eyes which already told half his tale.

“Lo, this man's face, like to a title leaf,  
Foretells the nature of the tragic volume.”

Rowland did not probably know these lines or anything like them, but he watched Saunders' approach with the same feeling. The butler came quite up to him and spoke in a low voice, as if he were afraid of being heard. “I beg your pardon, sir,” he said ; “I thought I had better let you know ; Mr. Archibald, sir,—I'm thinking he has been called away suddenly.”

“What ?” cried Rowland, holding by the marble of the chimney-piece, and feeling as if a touch would bring him down.

“Mr. Archibald, sir—I'm thinking he must have had some sudden call. His room is lying in great disorder, and his bed has not been slept in this night.”

He held by the marble of the chimney-piece for a full minute before he came to himself : and then his lips hanging a little loose, his voice a little thick—“Do you mean that my son—is not in the house ?”

“He's had some sudden call,” said the man, with instinctive endeavours to lessen the shock. “He's left no message. And there's the gentlemen all intent upon the shooting, and the ladies to go with their luncheon——”

Rowland paused for another minute before he spoke. Then he said, “Mr. Archie had to start very early for Glasgow on business. It was only settled last night—something about that messenger, you remember, Saunders, that came into the middle of the ball and looked so frightened.” His voice became easier as it went on, and he laughed at this recollection. “As I could not go myself, I sent my son. He may be detained a day or two. Just go to Mr. Saumarez and ask him, with my compliments, if he would take Mr. Archie's place. Is Roderick ready ?”

“Oh, yes, sir ; quite ready and waiting. It's a thought late : all the gentlemen have been a little late this morning.”

“What can you expect, Saunders, after a ball ? You can tell Mrs. Rowland I would like to see her as soon as she has a moment to spare.”

It was so then ; without remedy. Archie had gone—gone—not fled ; that could never be said of him ; gone to wait for the police coming to arrest him for forgery, as if that would ever be. God ! his boy—Mary's boy—the only son ; whom the ladies had been praising so for his conduct last night ; whom Lady Jean, they said—Lady Jean who was so ill to please, who was not an easy person—and he was gone. Rowland felt his heart in his breast as heavy as a stone. It had been beating very irregularly, sometimes loudly, sometimes quieted down for a moment, now it seemed to stop and lie heavy, like a stone. He waited till he heard the ladies' voices die away, the men come out to the door where Roderick was awaiting them, and saw the start from his window, himself unseen, feeling a kind of contempt in his misery for the men who are so easily amused. Old men, too : Sir John, as old as himself, so easily amused ! but then, perhaps, there was no son in this case to make his father's life a burden to him. "Has he daughters ?" old Lear said, as if a man had no right to be mad who had not. As for Sir John, tramping along in his knickerbockers, an older man than Rowland, he had no son ; and yet the father, unhappy, felt a sort of contempt for him so easily amused, while others were too sick at heart to bear the light. He went out of his room when the coast was clear, and went to Archie's room, which lay in the disorder it had been found in by the servant who went to call him in the morning : the drawers all open, the things thrown about. Nothing could be more dismal than the aspect of the room in this abandonment. It is terrible at all times to enter the empty room of any one whom we love, especially when its owner is sick or in trouble. The unused bed cold, as if it were never to be employed more ; the air of vacancy ; the emptiness and silence, have an effect of suggestion more overwhelming than any simple fact. And Archie's room was not only empty, it was abandoned. His father turned over the things upon the table in the miserable preoccupation of his mind, not knowing what he did, and then lifted a handful of papers, including Archie's cheque-book, which was lying there. "How careless of Archie !" he said, mechanically, as he carried them away. There was no real intention of carrying them away. He had not, indeed, thought on the subject at all, but took them up almost unawares.

Evelyn put her hand within his arm as he crossed the hall to his room, and accompanied him there. She told him that Archie had gone, but in what temper and disposition, softened, as she thought and hoped, and he listened with his head bent down, saying nothing. He was angry, yet he was soothed that she should be on Archie's side. "You take his part against your husband," he said roughly, but he loved her better for it than if she had taken his part against his son. There are artifices of the heart which it is well to know. And he sat heavily thinking for some time after she had ended her tale. Then he said abruptly, "I gave you yon cheque to keep. Give it me back, please."

Evelyn opened the drawer of a little ornamental escritoire, in which she had locked that fatal paper, and gave it to her husband. Rowland was a strong man, and he was not emotional, but the sight of the two round marks which were on the paper with broken edges, when the tears had pleaded unawares with their weight of saltiness and bitterness the rage and horror of the boy accused, was more than he could bear. He put it down hastily on the table, and for a moment covered his face with his hands. Those tears which anguish and shame had forced from his boy's eyes—who could have seen them unmoved? There was a relenting, a melting, a thawing of horrible ice about his heart. "If he was guilty," he said, in a faltering voice. "Evelyn, if he was guilty, do you think—"

She went and stood behind him, drawing his head against her breast. "You could but forgive him," she said, very low; "at the worst—at the worst."

"Come," he said, after that moment of emotion; "it is just a question of business after all. *This* was never taken from any book of mine. You see the difference—" He opened a drawer and drew out his cheque-book, pointing to her the numbers. The cheque was numbered in much more advanced numerals than Mr. Rowland's book. "That's nothing in itself," he added, "for I might have borrowed a cheque from some one, or got it at the bank, if I had been wanting for money then. I might have got it from—anybody that banks there. Archie—I might have got it from Archie." As he spoke his eye fell suddenly upon his son's cheque-book which he had brought from the empty room. He took it up and opened it almost with a smile. But the first glance struck him with a strange alarm. He gave a frightened look up at her, throwing back his head for a moment, then began slowly to turn over the pages. What an office that was! Evelyn stood behind, looking over his shoulder, feeling that the moment of intolerable crisis had come.

The smile was fixed upon his face; but it changed its character, and got to be the cynical smile of a demon upon that honest face. Over and over went the quivering long leaves of the pink cheques in his trembling fingers, and then—

"James, James!"

He put it in the place from which it had been torn, a scrap of the perforated line had been left on the side of the foil, and fitted with the horrible precision of such things. He laid it there exact, rag to rag, then gave her a triumphant glance, and broke into a fit of dry and awful laughter, such as the trembling woman, whom he pushed away from him, had never heard before.

"There!" he said, "there! and what do you think of that, and your brave young hero now?"

It seemed to Evelyn as if her spirit and courage were entirely gone from her, and she could never hold up her head again. She had recoiled when he pushed her away, but now came

tremblingly back, and looked at it as at a death-warrant. Ah! no delusion—no fancy—it was as clear as the cold dreary daylight that poured in upon them through the great window—as clear as that Mary's boy, who had looked so honest, who had faced his accuser with such rage of upright indignation, who had approached with such an unsuspecting look of innocence, as clear as that the boy—

"No, no, no!" she cried out. "I will not believe my senses, James! There is something in it more than we know."

"Ay! he said. "Ay, I well believe that—something more than you and me know, or perhaps could understand—though he's but twenty. Do you hear, Evelyn—only twenty, with plenty of time—"

"Yes," she cried, clasping her husband's hand, upon which her tears fell heavily, "plenty, plenty of time, thank God, to repent."

"To do more, and to do worse," he said. "Repent! I believe in that when I see it—but never before. Plenty of time to drag down my honour to the dust—to make my name a byeword—to lay my pride low. Oh, plenty of time for that, and a good beginning."

He took a large envelope out of one of the drawers of the table at which he was sitting, and methodically arranging the cheque in the place from which it had been torn, at the end of the book, placed the cheque-book in the envelope, and fastening it up, locked it into a private drawer.

"There!" he said, "that is done with, Evelyn. We'll say no more about it. We'll just disperse, my dear, you to your farm and me to my merchandise. The incident is over. It's ended and done with. If we can forget it, so much the better. It's not very long to have had the delusion of a—a—son in the house. It's well it has been so short a time. Now that chapter's closed, and there's no more to be said."

"James! you will not abandon the boy for the first error—the first slip?"

"Error—slip! I would like to know what kind of a moral code you have," he said with a smirk. "An error would be—perhaps staying out too late at night—perhaps forgetting himself after dinner. I would not cast him off for a slip like that. And if he asks me for money, he shall have it, enough to keep him. But as for the slip of a lad of twenty who signs another man's name to a cheque for a thousand pounds—"

"Oh, what does the sum matter?" she cried.

"The sum matters—nothing. I would have made a coat of thousand pounds, like old Jacob in the Bible. Ay, that and more. But never mind, it's all passed and over, Evelyn. My dear, you have behaved through it all like an angel. God bless you for it. Now go away and leave me to my business, and we will never mention it again."

"I do not consent to that, James. I will mention him many times again."

"Then you will force me to keep out of your reach, my dear," her husband cried. And yet he was thankful to her for what she said, thankful to the bottom of his heart.

Thus Archie disappeared, and the waters closed over his head --but not silently or without commotion. The men went out to the hill and made tolerable but not very good bags ; the ladies took them their luncheon, and there was a very merry party among the heather, but when two came together they asked each other, "What has become of the son?" or "What have they done with Archie?" and the incident was as far from being ended as human incident ever was.

## CHAPTER XXXVII

If any one thinks that such events can come to pass in a house, and the servants remain unaware of the movement and commotion, I can only say that these persons are little acquainted either with human nature, or the peculiar emotions and interests called forth by domestic service. As certain members are kept in exercise by certain kinds of action, so there are certain sets of mental and moral fibres that are moved by the differing conditions of existence, and no one is more completely and continuously in operation than those of interest, curiosity, and that mixture of liking and opposition which naturally actuate one set of human creatures towards the other set of human creatures who are immediately over them, and control and occupy all their movements. It gives something of the interest of a continual drama to life, to watch the complicated play of human fate going on so near, in circumstances so intimate that it is scarcely possible not to enter into a certain partizanship, and take sides. Thus there were some of the servants who were all for Mr. Archie, and had an instinctive certainty that he was being unjustly treated and ill-used, and some who held for the master, with a conviction that a young son was never to be trusted, and was apt to go astray, as the sparks fly upward, by force of nature. Singularly enough, though Mrs. Rowland was a considerate and kind mistress, good to everybody, and taking a much greater interest in the members of her household than either father or son, nobody took her side : partly because she was, more or less, like themselves, a sort of spectator, not one of the first actors in the drama ; and still more because she was the stepmother, and naturally, according to all traditions, a malignant element doing harm to both. The items of fresh information which were brought to the upper servants by Saunders, and which percolated through the house by means of an observant footman, were eagerly seized by the attendant crowd, and rapidly

classified under fact or guess, according to its kind, until the superstructure was very remarkable. Naturally, the servants' hall knew far better what Mr. Rowland was going to do than he himself did, and had settled the career of Archie in every particular before he had more than the most rudimentary idea of it himself.

It is a very poor and shabby thing to gossip with servants as to the habits and peculiarities of their masters: nothing can be more true than this. But it is very difficult for a lady not to hear, as she can scarcely help hearing, the word dropped by her maid—or for a man to arrest in time the revelation that falls from his attendant in respect to the disturbed condition of a house. "How could there be much comfort in the house, my lady, when there was a terrible scene in the middle of the night, and poor Mr. Archie never in his bed at all, but gone out of the house by break of day?" You have to be quick indeed, and very much on your guard, to prevent the woman, as she stands behind you, from letting loose such an expression as this before you can stop her. And still less is a man able to check the valet who thinks it so very queer that a gentleman should have arrived late on business, and come scared-like into the ball-room all in his travelling things. "And they do say, sir, that that's why young Mr. Rowland has disappeared this morning, though the house is full of company." How can you restrain or ignore these communications from the back-stairs? Consequent upon a number of such communications was the resolution taken by everybody at Rosmore to arrange their departure as early as possible on the second day. All felt confused and troubled in the dreary rooms in the evening, where there was nobody to lead the revels, and where the master of the house scarcely took any pains to conceal the preoccupation of his mind. Nobody could have known, except by the anxious glance she threw now and then at her husband, by Mrs. Rowland's bearing that anything was wrong, and Marion was in her usual spirits, ready to do a little solid flirtation (for the young men complained of Marion that she was far from being light in hand) with any candidate: but Rowland gave so broken an attention to what was going on, mingled in the conversation so abruptly, and fell into such silences between, that it was easy to see how little accomplished he was in the art of living, according to its highest social sense. Whether it was that, or the hints from below stairs, which had reached more or less every member of the party, it was certain that it was a party very little at its ease. One or two of the bolder guests asked directly for Archie, if he was expected home that evening, if he was likely to be long detained by his business, etc.; the more timid did not mention his name. "What is the best thing to do," they asked each other privately, "when there is trouble of that kind in a house?" Lady Marchbanks, who was not generally supposed to be a very wise woman, here spoke with authority out of the

depths of a great experience, being a woman with many brothers, sons, and nephews, and full of knowledge on such points. "I always ask," she said, "just as if I were sensible of nothing—just as if it were the most natural thing in the world for a young man to be suddenly called away on business, when it is well known he has no business, and his father's house full of guests. It's the kindest way," Lady Marchbanks said, and she had occasion to know. But they were all unanimous in finding reasons why they must depart next morning after their delightful visit. Interesting as human complications are to all spectators, there are few people who think it right to stay on in manifest presence of trouble in the house.

There was one, however, who excelled himself in friendly devotion to his hosts, and that was Eddy Saumarez, who took upon himself, only with far greater ability than Archie could have shown, the work of the son of the house. There was every appearance that it would have been a very dull and embarrassing evening but for Eddy, who flung himself into the middle of affairs like a hero. He sang, he talked, he arranged a rubber in one corner, a game in another, of that semi-intellectual kind which is such a blessed resource in a country-house, and has the happy effect of making dull people think themselves clever. Eddy himself was too clever not to be infinitely bored by such contrivances, but he forgot himself and stood up like a hero, asking the most amusing questions and giving the wittiest answers when it was his turn to be badgered, and keeping the company in such a state of stimulation that even the heaviest grew venturesome, and made themselves ridiculous with delight, for the amusement of the rest. He even drew a smile from Rowland, who was too restless for whist, but who came more than once within Eddy's wilder circle of merriment, and was cheated into a momentary forgetfulness. When the party dispersed, having passed, instead of the dull hours they had most of them anticipated, an unusually animated evening, Rowland came up and laid his heavy hand on Eddy's shoulder. The young man started like a criminal, grew red and grew pale, and for once in his life was so disconcerted that he had not a word to say. And yet Rowland's address was of the most flattering kind. "I can't tell how much I'm obliged to you," his host said. "You've been the life of the house since ever you came, Eddy, my man. And to-night I don't know what we should have done without you. My wife will tell you the same thing. You've been the saving of us to-night. If ever I can serve you in anything—Lord! I would have done that for her, on account of her interest in you. But remember now, that on your own account, if I ever can be of any service—"

Eddy shrank back from that touch. He would not meet Rowland's eye. He faltered in his answer, he that was always so ready. "I don't deserve that you should speak to me so," he stammered out. "I—I've done nothing, sir. All that I can ask

is your forgiveness for—for—inflicting so long a visit upon you."

"Is that all?" said Rowland, with a laugh. "Then I hope you'll make your offence double, and give me twice as much to forgive you. Are you bound for the smoking-room now?"

"Perhaps I had better go," said Eddy, carefully watching the other's eyes.

"Do, my good lad. I had a disturbed night, and I'm out of the habit of keeping late hours. I will not appear myself, if you are going—though I dare say they will all go soon to their beds to-night."

"Good-night, sir," said Eddy, "I hope you'll sleep well." There was almost a tender tone in the youth's voice.

"Oh, I'll sleep well enough. I always sleep. Good-night—and thank you again, Eddy, for backing me up."

As for Evelyn, she pressed his hand with a grateful look, and said also, "Thank you, Eddy," in a soft tone, which, for some reason or other, seemed more than Eddy could bear. He almost tore his hand from hers, and turned his back upon her as though she had insulted him, which filled Mrs. Rowland with astonishment; but when there were so many things of importance to think of, what did Eddy's look matter! She was glad when the girls too said good-night, and left her alone with her husband—who, however, was in no humour for conversation.

"I'm going to bed," he said. "I can always sleep, thank God. Evelyn, if you ever write to that lad's father—"

"I never do, James."

"Well, you might, my dear. It would have been no offence to me. I'm not one to sin against my mercies, as if I did not know when I had got a good woman. But you might say the lad had been a real stand-by. When you have a son, and the like of that can be said, it's a pity that a man should not have the satisfaction—" He broke off with a sigh, and walked up and down the room with his hands deeply thrust into his pockets, and then pulled the heavy curtains aside and looked out. It was one of the windows under the colonnade just where the view was—the view through the trees over the triumphant Clyde, with its towns and hills beyond. There was a faint glimmer of light in sky and water, which showed where the opening was. Ah! this, which had been the star of his life for so many years—to what had it turned when it was granted to his eager desire?

"James! there is nothing to prevent you from having that satisfaction—yet."

He looked at her and burst into a hoarse laugh—then, as she essayed to speak again, stamped his foot on the carpet in impatience and hurried away.

An hour later there was a knock at Rosamond's door in the stillness of the early withdrawal which last night's dissipation had made general throughout the house. Rosamond was sitting

in her dressing-gown before her fire—thinking of many things, and particularly of her father's last letter, which lay open upon the little table beside her.

"Stay as long as you can," Mr. Saumarez said. "It's the best chance you can have at present to see a little society, and keep Eddy on the straight."

Rosamond was not happy, she could not have told why. It was not that Archie was of any importance to her, but there is something in the atmosphere of a disturbed and unhappy house, which reflects itself in the consciousness of the most indifferent guest. She could not think what he could have done. The offence of which his father had convicted him the other day in the hall, of having refused money to a friend, was of all reproaches in the world the most extraordinary to Rosamond. She thought with a laugh that was irrestrainable, of what her own father's remark would have been, and the high tone of indignation he would have assumed at the folly, nay the criminality, of throwing money away. "Where do you expect to get more?" he would have asked with righteous wrath, had his son been suspected of such a miserable weakness. But, to do him justice, Eddy had no guilty inclinations that way. Curiously enough, while Rosamond laughed with the surprised contempt, yet respect, of the poor for Rowland's liberality, which had, in spite of herself, the aspect of "swagger" in the girl's eyes—she felt, at the same time, something of the same astonishment, mingled with disappointment, that Archie should have laid himself open to such a reproach. "I should have thought he would have given away—everything he had," Rosamond said to herself—not as praise, but as a characteristic feature of Archie's nature, as she conceived it—and she was disappointed that he had not carried out her idea of him, notwithstanding that she believed such a procedure to be folly of the deepest dye.

She was considerably startled by the knock at the door, and still more by seeing Eddy in the silk smoking-suit, which was too thin for this locality. It was perhaps that flimsy dress which made him look so pinched and cold, and he came in with eager demonstration of his delight at the sight of her fire.

"Mine's gone out an hour ago," he said, "let's get a good warm before we go to bed."

"You have come from the smoking-room," she said; "you will fill my room with the smell of your cigarettes. I hate the smell of the paper worse than the tobacco."

"Oh, you're always hating something," said Eddy vaguely. And then he added, standing with his back to the fire, looking down upon her in her low chair—"It won't matter how it smells, for to-morrow we ought to go."

"To go!" she cried in astonishment. "What new light have you got on the subject? for I have heard nothing of this before."

"Never mind what you've heard," said Eddy. "Circumstances have arisen—altogether beyond my control," he added with a laugh at the familiar words. "In short, if you must know it, Rose, I can't stay here any longer, and that is all there is about it," he said.

"Do you mean now that Archie has got into disgrace? How has he got into disgrace? I can't think what he can have done."

"I mean—that and other things. How should I know what he has done? Some of his father's fads. But in every way we'd better go: everybody is going, and I'm dead-tired of the place. There is not a single thing to do. We shot every bird on the hill to-day, and more—and after this burst there won't be a soul in the house for months. Probably they have themselves visits to pay. I tell you we'd better go to-morrow, Rose."

"They say nothing about visits to pay," said Rosamond, bewildered. "Mrs. Rowland said to-day she hoped we would stay as long as we pleased: and father is of opinion that if we can hang on for another month—well, he says so. It saves so much expense when the house is shut up."

"But I tell you I am not going to do it," said Eddy, "whatever the governor chooses to say. You can if you please, but I shan't. You may stay altogether if you please. Marry Archie, it would not perhaps be such a bad spec; and become the daughter of the house." He laughed, but there was not much mirth in his laugh.

"You need not be insulting at least," said his sister. "And as for the daughter of the house—the less there is said on that subject the better, if you are going away."

"Why! do you think she would mind?" he asked. "Mind you, she is not so simple as you think. I don't believe she cares. If she did, that might be a sort of a way: but mind what I say, Rose—that girl will not marry anybody till she's been at Court and seen the world. She might like me a little perhaps—but if she saw her way to anything better—as Heaven knows she might do easily enough. Oh, I don't make myself any illusions on that subject! She would drop me like a shot."

"As you would her," said Rosamond, with an air of scorn.

"Precisely so; but unless I'm very far mistaken, we meet—that little Glasgow girl and I, that am the fine flower of civilization—on equal ground."

"So much the better for her if it is so," said Rosamond.

"Am I saying anything different?—only I don't think there's the least occasion to be nervous about little May."

There was a pause here, and for a moment or two nothing was said. A little hot colour had come on Rosamond's face. Was she perhaps asking herself whether Archie was as easily to be let down as his sister, and likely to emancipate himself as

lightly? But on this subject, at least, she never said a word. She broke silence at last by saying, with a sigh—

"We have nowhere to go."

"Nonsense: we have the house to go to. I don't say it will be very comfortable. Old Sarah is not a *cordon bleu*."

"As if I cared about the cooking!"

"But I do," said Eddy; "and the one that does will naturally have more to suffer than the one that doesn't; but thank heaven, there's the club—and I dare say we shall get on. The end of October is not so bad in town. There's always some theatre open—and a sort of people have come back."

"Nobody we know—and we have not a penny;—and father will be so angry, he will send us nothing. And they are so willing to have us here; why, I heard Mr. Rowland say to you——"

"Never mind what you heard Rowland say," said Eddy, almost sullenly. "You can stay if you like. But I won't, and I can't stop here. Oh! it's been bad enough to-day! I wouldn't go through another, not for——" Here he stopped and broke forth into a laugh, which stopped again suddenly, leaving him with a dark and clouded countenance—"a thousand pounds!"

"I don't understand you, Eddy," said Rosamond, with an anxious look. "You have not been borrowing money? What do you mean by a thousand pounds?"

"Do you think," said Eddy with a short laugh, "that any one would lend me a thousand pounds? That shows how little you girls know."

"If I don't know, it would be strange," said Rosamond, with a sigh, "seeing how dreadfully hard it has been to get money since ever I can remember. And there is no telling with people like Mr. Rowland. Didn't you hear him coming down upon Archie for not giving his money to some one who was ill? Fancy father talking like that to one of us!"

"The circumstances have no analogy," said Eddy. "In the first place, we have no money to give: and we want hundreds of things that money could buy. Archie and fellows like him are quite different—they want nothing, and they've got balances at their bankers; not that he has much of that, poor beggar, after all."

"What do you mean, Eddy?"

"Well, I mean he's a good sort of fellow if he weren't such a fool;—and I could have thrown some light on his refusal, perhaps, if they had asked me."

"Oh, why didn't you, Eddy!—when his father was so vexed and so severe."

"It was none of my business," said the young man. "And Archie is not a fellow who likes to be interfered with. If I had suggested anything, he would probably have turned upon me."

"And what was it?" said Rosamond. "What was the light you could have thrown?"

"Oh, I don't mean to tell you," cried Eddy; "you have nothing to do with it that I can see. And it is of no use telling his father, for he's in a far deeper hole now. Poor old Archie—he is an ass, though, or he would never have got into such a mess as he is in now. He never can strike a blow in his own defence, and never will; but look here, Rose," cried Eddy, "all this jawing will make it no better; I am going to-morrow, whatever you may choose to do. I can't stop another night here."

"You *must* have something to do with it. I am sure you have something on your conscience, Eddy. You have got a conscience somewhere, though you pretend not. It is you that has got Archie into trouble!—you have been tempting him and leading him away. That day in Glasgow! Ah, now I see!"

"What do you see?" cried Eddy, contemptuously; but his sallow face betrayed a sharp, sudden rising of colour. He did not look at her, but kicked away a footstool with some vehemence, on which a moment before he had rested his foot.

"Let's hear!" he said, "what fine thing do you see?"

"You must have got—gambling, or something," she said, feeling to her heart the inadequacy of the words to express the great terror and incoherent suggestion of evil that had come into her mind, she knew not how.

"Gambling—with Archie!" her brother burst into a loud laugh. "One might as well try to gamble with Ben Ros, or whatever that beast of a hill is called. I broke all my toes going up him to-day. No, my dear Rose; you will have to try again," Eddy said.

She looked at him with eyes full of consternation and horror. It was incredible to Rosamond that Archie should have done anything to merit such condemnation: but it was not at all incredible to her that Eddy should have got him into mischief. She looked at her brother as if she could have burst through the envelope of his thoughts with her intent and searching eyes.

"Eddy, I *know* you have something to do with it," she said.

"That proves nothing," said Eddy; "you know what you think only."

"I don't know what I think! I think terrible things, but I can't tell what they are. Oh, Eddy, this was such a quiet house when we came into it! They might not be very happy, but there was no harm. And Archie had begun to please his father. I know he tried. And they have been very kind to us—the ball last night was as much for us as for their own children."

"It was to get themselves into favour in the county—it was neither for us nor for them."

Rosamond was herself so much accustomed to measure everything in this way, and to have it so measured, that she had no protest to make.

"But we had all the benefit," she said. "We were made the chief along with Marion and Archie. And Mr. Rowland has

shown how much he thinks of you, Eddy—he has made you his deputy."

"Yes, to save himself trouble," said Eddy; "to amuse his guests—is that a great sign of kindness? It was kindness to himself. But if they had been as kind as—whatever you please, what would that matter? I cannot stand any more of it, and I am going away."

"But you have no money," she said.

"Oh yes; I have a little—enough to take us back to town, if you please—and to get me a few chops at the club till the governor turns up—who has a right to feed me at least until I come of age."

"You must have got it out of Archie," said Rosamond, her cheeks burning, springing from her seat, and standing between him and the door, as if to force an explanation. But Eddy only smiled.

"For a right down odious supposition—an idea that has neither sense nor possibility in it, commend me to a girl and a sister! How could I get it out of Archie? What had Archie to give? I think you must be taking leave of your senses," he said.

Was it so?—Was it merely a sympathetic sense of the trouble in the house, and sorrow for Archie, whatever might be the cause of his banishment? Or was it some sense of guilt, some feeling that it was he who had led Archie away, and who ought to share in the penalty? But, to tell the truth, Rosamond could not identify any of these fine feelings with Eddy. He was not apt to feel compunctions: perhaps to take him at his word was the safest way.

## CHAPTER XXXVIII

NEXT morning, a rattle of pebbles thrown against the window, roused Marion, who was by nature an early riser, and who had been dressed for some time, though she had not gone down-stairs. She opened the window, and saw Eddy below, making signs to her and pointing towards a path which led into the woods, across a broad stripe of sunshine. Eddy stood and basked in this light, making gestures, as if in adoration of the sun. He did not call to her, for in the clear morning air, his voice might have reached other ears than hers. But Marion called to him lightly, "I'm coming, I'm coming," with no fear of anything that could be said. She was not disturbed by the unceremonious character of his appeal to her attention. Marion's antecedents made it a very natural thing, and no way to be reprehended, that a lad should call to his lass in this way. She ran down-stairs, delighted with the summons, and joined

him, almost hoping that Miss Marchbanks might see from her window and feel the superiority of the daughter of the house.

"What might you be wanting, rousing people when perhaps they were in their beds?" said Marion.

"You were not in your bed. I know you get up early. Let's have a ramble," said Eddy, "before any one knows."

"Oh, is that all? but we can ramble wherever you please; and when the people are gone," said Marion, with a sigh, "we'll have it all to ourselves."

"Do you wish that the people were not going, May?"

"I never said, sir, that you were to call me May."

"No, but you did not prohibit it. I cannot call you Miss Marion, like the servants, or Miss Rowland, like young Marchbanks."

As he assumed the tone of young Marchbanks when he said this, Marion received it with a burst of laughter. There was nothing particularly amusing in the tone or manners of young Marchbanks, but a mimic has always an easy triumph.

"Alas," said Eddy, instantly changing his tone, and taking her hand to draw it through his arm, "though they were all going away this moment, it would not be much advantage to us, May, for I must go too, this very day."

"You going, Eddy!" this exclamation burst from her in spite of herself. She hastened to add, "Mr. Saumarez, I did not know you were going. Do you really--really mean--" the tears came into her eyes.

He had drawn her hand through his arm, and held it with his other hand. "I can't stay longer," he said. "How can I stay longer? There is Archie gone, who might be supposed my attraction: and I daren't go and say to your father what my real attraction is."

"Oh, that is nothing to me," said Marion, with a toss of her head, "about your real attraction. Nobody is asking you—you are just welcome to stay or—welcome to go: it is whatever you please."

"You know very well," he said, resisting her attempt to snatch away her hand, "that I would never go if I could help it, unless I could carry you off with me; if I could do that, I should not mind."

"And you know very well," said Marion, "that you will never do that."

"I suppose I ought to know; but there are some things that one never can learn. When a man thinks of a girl night and day, he naturally feels that the girl might give a moment now and then to thoughts of him."

"Oh, as for that," said Marion, tossing her head, "I've had people that thought about me before now, but I never troubled my head to think of them."

"You are as heartless as a stone," said Eddy; "it is of no use speaking to you, for you are past feeling. One might as well

fall in love with a picture, or a dummy in a milliner's shop."

"Dummy yourself!" cried Marion, highly indignant, giving him a shake with the hand that was on his arm.

And then they both burst out laughing together. As a matter of fact, though they understood each other extraordinarily well, and made no false representations of each other as lovers are in the habit of doing, there was a little love at bottom between this curious pair.

"Do you know what has been the row about Archie?" said Eddy, after a little pause.

"It's something about money," said Marion; "he has been spending his own money that was given him to spend—and he has not sent it to a poor student, as papa thought he would. But I would like to know why he should. The student should have stayed at home, and then his own people would have been obliged to help him. If Archie were to give up his money to all the poor students, what would be the use of giving him money at all? If I were in his place I am sure I would just give what I please, and keep a good share to myself. It is just ridiculous to give you money, and then say you are to give it away."

"Is that the only reason?" said Eddy; "I thought there had been enough of that."

"Oh, I don't know if it's the only reason. I will go back to the house if it's only Archie you want to hear about. You can ask Mrs. Rowland, she is your great friend, or Saunders, that looks so wise and knows everything. But for me, I am going back to the house."

"I only ask," said Eddy, tightening his hold on her hand, "to keep it off a little longer; for how am I to say good-bye—not knowing how we may meet again—for I know what's in your thoughts, May. You think I'm well enough to play with while there's nobody here, but when you come up to town and everybody is at your feet——"

"Oh, such ridiculous nonsense,—everybody at my feet! who would be at my feet?—no person! You speak as if I were a Duke's daughter."

"You are better than most Duke's daughters. You will marry a Duke if you please, with that little saucy face of yours, and mints of money."

"I hope I will not be married for my money," said Marion: "though of course there's something in that," she added seriously. "I'll not deny that it has to be reckoned with. Papa would not be pleased if all his work came to nothing, and I got just a nobody."

"Like me," said Eddy.

"I never said like you. There might be other things—papa likes you, you see."

"And you, May? Oh, May, you little witch! I wish—I wish

I only wanted to marry you for your money—then I should not feel it as I do now."

"You wouldn't like to marry me without my money," Marion said.

"Wouldn't I,—try me! though all the same I don't know very well how we should live," Eddy said.

"And I never said I would marry you at all—or any person," said Marion. "Maybe I will never marry at all."

"Oh, that's so likely!"

"Well, it is not likely," Marion admitted candidly, "but you never know what may happen. And," she added, "if Archie is to be put out of his share, and everything come to me, then, whether I liked it or not, I would have to think first what was doing most justice to papa."

Eddy, in spite of his self-control, turned pale. "Archie," he said, in a tone of horror, "put out of his share!"

Marion gave him a keen, investigating look. "When a man has two children," she said, "and one of them flies in his face every time he can, and the other is very careful always to do her duty, whether it is pleasing herself or not, I would not wonder at anything, for my part. He might like the son best for the name and all that, but if the lassie would do him most justice? I am not saying if it would be a good thing or not. But the man might see that in the one there would be no credit, but plenty in the other. I am thinking of it just in a general way," Marion said.

"Then good-bye to me," said Eddy, "if you were to be a great heiress—and Archie! Good life!" he let her hand go, and, cold though the morning air was, wiped the moisture from his forehead. "I'd better take a header into the loch and be done with it," he said.

"You will not do that, Mr. Eddy, for you like yourself best: though perhaps you may like Archie a little—or, perhaps, me."

"Perhaps even you!" cried Eddy. "Perhaps I do, or I shouldn't have stayed down here in the north for a month with nothing to do. You are a dreadful little thing to talk quietly of tossing me over after all that has passed, like an old glove. And to take Archie's place, as if it were nothing, as if it were the most natural thing in the world!"

"And is it not?" said Marion. "I never would have done a thing to harm Archie. It is none of my doing; but if it opens papa's eyes, and makes him ask who will do him the most credit—him, that would never be anything but a common lad at the best, or me, that might be at the Queen's court, and do him great justice."

Eddy clapped his hands together, with a quick laugh. "Marry the Duke," he said.

"Well," said Marion, with dignity, "and if I did that? What more would it be than I would deserve, and doing great justice to papa!"

Eddy stood for a moment looking at her, with a curious mixture of pain which was quite new to him, in being thus left out of Marion's cold-blooded philosophy, and of cynical amusement, tempered by wonder at the progress this very young and apparently simple person had made in the mystery of worldliness. He had the sensation, too, of having done it all, of having wrought that ruin to Archie which might place Archie's sister in a position to balk his own plans and humiliate himself. He had meant to have the upper hand himself in all the arrangements between them. He had meant, indeed, this very morning to bind her by a quasi engagement, while leaving himself free for whatever eventualities might come. But Marion, with these cool, matter-of-fact dispositions, had turned the tables upon Eddy. And he was discomposed besides to find that it actually hurt him. He, the accomplished man of the world that he was, so infinitely above Marion in experience and knowledge! it gave him a confused pang which he could not understand, to find that he was no more to her than half an hour before he had believed her to be to him. He was more or less stunned by that sensation, which was unexpected, and stood vaguely gazing at her, coming to himself before he could reply. "I don't find much place for me in all this," he said, ruefully. He could have laughed at his own discomfiture if he had not been so ridiculously wounded and sore.

It was perhaps a sign that she was not very sure of herself, but she did not look at him, which also took away one of Eddy's weapons. She walked on quite calmly by his side, looking straight before her, neither to the right hand nor the left.

"What was your place in it, Mr. Eddy?" she said, "except just as a friend: and there is no difference in that. You're still a friend—unless you have changed your mind."

"May! you are a little witch! you're a—— Come, you know this is all nonsense," said Eddy; "I never pretended to be a friend."

"Well, perhaps you never were—to Archie, at least," said Marion.

"What do you know about Archie? What have I done to Archie? I never intended—I never thought of harming him; I could swear it," cried Eddy, in great excitement; "never! never! I've done a heap of wrong things," he put up his hand to his throat with a gasp as for breath, "I've done enough to—sink me for ever. I know I have: you needn't say anything with your little set face that I was silly enough to care for. But I never meant to ruin Archie, nor harm him, never! I'll go to your father, and tell him——"

"What will you tell him?" cried Marion, to whom nothing but her own share in Eddy's expressions seemed of any importance. "That we've perhaps been very silly, you and me?—but you the most, for I was never meaning what you thought. I am not a person to let myself go," said the girl, folding her

hands. "I was just willing to be very friendly—but no more. All the rest was just—your fun. I thought you cared for nothing but fun. And I'm not averse to that myself," she said, turning her face to his with the provoking and saucy smile which Eddy had so completely understood, yet which—was it possible?—he had fallen a victim to all the same. It was Marion who had the upper hand. She was not averse to the fun, but she did not mean to compromise her future for Eddy, any more than Eddy up to this moment had intended to do for her. But Marion thought it best now to conciliate him, that he might not rush off and compromise matters by making proposals to her father, which was all she thought of. As for those wild words about Archie, Marion did not even pretend to inquire what they meant.

He went to Mrs. Rowland as soon as he could get a chance after the leave-taking of so many of her guests. "You will have to shake hands with me too, presently," he said. "I'm going off to-night."

"You, Eddy?" Evelyn's face grew longer and graver with a certain dismay. "I was calculating upon you to keep us cheerful," she said. "Why must you go?"

"I have so many reasons I couldn't tell you all. In the first place I must, which perhaps will do: like the fool that had a hundred reasons for not saluting—but first of all because he had neither powder nor shot."

"What is the *must*?" said Evelyn; "your father perhaps coming back—"

"Oh, I know," said Eddy, "that the governor would refuse you nothing, Mrs. Rowland—though I am next to nothing in his estimation, to be sure. No, there's other reasons, pecuniary and otherwise."

"I am afraid, Eddy, you are a very reckless boy."

"Rather," he said, with an uneasy and embarrassed laugh; "but I am going to turn over a new leaf, and not be so any more."

A tender impulse moved the woman, who had a faint underlying recollection which she could not quite quench, though she was ashamed of it, that she might have been Eddy's mother. "I am not very rich in my own person," she said, "though my husband is: but if there is anything, Eddy, that I could do, or James either, I am sure—"

"Oh, good heavens!" cried Eddy, under his breath. "Don't, for pity's sake, say such a thing to me," he cried. "You don't know how it hurts—what an unutterable cad it makes me feel."

"Why?" she asked, with a smile; but she did not pursue the subject. "I wish you could stay a little longer. If Archie does not come home in a day or two, my husband will sadly want some one to cheer him. I wish you could stay."

"Is Archie coming home in a day or two?"

"I don't know," she said, faltering. "I can't tell—I hope so with all my heart. I need not try to hide from you, Eddy, that his father and he—have had a disagreement."

"Mrs. Rowland, don't think me impertinent : can you tell me what it was about?"

"It is their secret, not mine," she said ; then with a troubled smile, "You know what fathers and sons most generally disagree about."

"Money," he said, with so disturbed a look, that Mrs. Rowland felt in her heart she had been unjust in thinking Eddy callous to anything that did not concern himself.

"My husband—is too suspicious. I believe in him, poor boy. I hope time," she said, with a sigh, "will clear it up and bring everything right."

It gave her pleasure to think better of Eddy after that interview. The boy, after all, she thought, must have a heart.

But he was not like himself : his face, which was usually so full of fun and mischief, was clouded and unhappy. When it was understood, though not without a struggle, that he must go that evening—and even Mr. Rowland resisted it with a certain terror (though he was very glad at the same time to get all the strangers out of the way) of being left alone with his trouble and his wife and daughter, who could so ill soothe it—Eddy's aspect startled everybody. He seemed, he who was so easy-minded, to be troubled by some doubt, and unable to make up his mind what he ought to do. A dozen times during the afternoon he was seen to cross the hall towards the library, where Rowland had shut himself up. But his courage failed him by the time he reached the door. Marion, who kept her eyes upon his movements, knew, she flattered herself, perfectly what Eddy meant. He wanted to lay his hopes before her father, to find out whether his consent was possible, to lay a sort of embargo upon herself before she was even seen in society, or had her chance. Marion had quite made up her mind what to say in case she should be called in to the library and questioned on the subject. She would say that she was not a person adverse to a little fun when it presented itself. But that as for serious meaning, she never had thought there was anything in it. Marion did not at all dislike the idea of being called in, and having to say this ; and she was not angry with Eddy for the supposed appeal against her cruelty, which she believed him about to make. She did not want him to be permanently dismissed, either, nor was she unwilling that her father should be warned as to future contingencies, for, after all, there was no telling how things might turn out.

The question was solved so far as Eddy was concerned by the sudden exit of Rowland from his room, just as the young man was summing up all his courage to enter it.

"Are you ready, my boy?" Rowland said ; "your things

packed—since you will go? for the steamboat, you know, will wait for no man. Come out, and take a turn with me."

They walked together across the lawn to the spot where the trees opened and the Clyde below the bank weltered, gray in the afternoon light—a composition of neutral tones. Rowland said nothing for a minute. He stood looking at his favourite view, and then he gave vent to a long and deep sigh.

"Here's a lesson for you, Eddy, my man," he said. "For as many years as you've been in being I've coveted this bonnie house, and that view among the trees. And a proud man I was when I got them—proud; and everybody ready to take up my parable and say, 'See what a man's exertions, when he has set his heart upon a thing, will do.' Oh, laddie, the vanity of riches! I have not had them half a year nor near it. And now I would give the half of my substance I had never come nigh the place or heard its name."

"I am very sorry," said Eddy; "but had the place anything to do with it? Would things have gone better if you had not been here?"

Rowland gave him a quick look, and stopped in what he seemed about to say. Then he resumed after a moment.

"That's true too; you are right in what you say. It has nothing to do with the place, or any place. It was fixed, I suppose, before the beginning of the earth, that so it was to be."

"Mr. Rowland," said Eddy, "I've been wanting to say something, and I have never had the chance—that is, I am frightened to say it in case you should think it impudent or—presuming. When Archie refused the money to that poor beggar, I ought to have spoken: I was a wretched coward; it was because he had given all his money—to me."

"Ah!" cried the father, with a slight start; "he had given his money—to you?" He had almost forgot, in the strain and stress of the other question, which was so much more important, what this meant about the poor beggar whom Archie had refused.

"Every penny," said Eddy, with considerable emotion. If that avowal would only do, it would be enough without any other! "He found me down on my luck about some bets and things, and he immediately offered to help me. I had not the courage to tell you when you spoke to him—that night; and he, like the fine fellow he is—"

"Ah!" said Rowland again; and then he gripped Eddy's slight hand, and wrung it till the lad thought the blood must come. "And you're a fine fellow," he said, "to stand up for him you think your friend."

A cold dew came out on Eddy's brow: oh how miserable, what a caitiff he felt—a fine fellow—he! If the man only knew!

"But," said Rowland, "if that had been all! I had forgotten that offence. Thank you, though, for speaking. If I can find

any ground for a more favourable judgment, I'll remember what you have said. Let's think of your own affairs: if you will allow me to speak—so recent a friend; but my wife knew you before you were born." He stopped to laugh at this jest, but in reality to recover a little from his embarrassment. "My lad, you spoke of bets. You shouldn't bet, a young fellow of your age."

A gleam of mischievous light shot from Eddy's eyes.

"I am aware of that, sir," he said, with much humility; "and if you knew all the good resolutions I have made—"

"Never mind making them: you can't keep them. Just do it, and don't amuse yourself with saying you will do it. From all I can learn, your family is not rich, and you will have a place to keep up. Mind, that's a great responsibility. You must eschew betting as you would eschew the devil."

"I'll try, sir, to get the better of them both," said Eddy, much relieved by this change of subject.

"I hope you'll continue in that mind; and recollect this: you have been very friendly and pleasant in this house at a time when I was scarcely my own man, and took the entertainment on your shoulders, and were just the life and soul—— If I can give you a day in harvest, as the country folks say, another time——" He smote Eddy on the shoulders a genial blow, but it made his slight figure quiver. "You may not understand that homely form of speech; but if I can serve you, my boy, at a pinch—I never grudge anything I can do for a man that's served me in time of need. What's the matter with you, boy? are you ill?"

"No," said Eddy, after a pause. "No—I'm not ill; it was only something in my throat. You're too good, sir. I can't look you in the face when I think——"

"Well, well," said Rowland. It pleases a man to make an impression—to bring repentance to a careless soul. "You must just never do it again, as the children say. It's a bad thing from beginning to end: even gambling in business I never could agree with. Honest work, that's the only salvation—in this world. Don't forget what I've said. And now we'll go in to the ladies, who are waiting to give you your tea, and purr over you. For the steamboat will wait for no man, and you should leave here when we see her starting from the head of the loch."

They went in together with a wonderful look of friendship, and there were curious signs of emotion in Eddy's face. Had he spoken to papa? Marion asked herself. If he had done so, it was clear that the answer had not been unfavourable: but in that case, why was Eddy in so dreadful a hurry to get away?

## CHAPTER XXXIX

EDDY had gone, and a silence, that seemed to radiate round the house like a special atmosphere, fell upon Rosmore. Winter, which had been only threatening, dropped all at once in torrents of sweeping rain and wild winds that shook the house. It requires a lively spirit at any time to stand up against the pale downpour which falls in sheets from the colourless sky between the large dull windows and the cowering trees, and shuts out every other prospect : but when there is misery within, the climax afforded by that dismal monotony without is appalling. The two girls scarcely knew what it was ; it was the reaction after the ball, which had been such a great thing to look forward to, and now was over, and everything connected with it : no more preparations or consultations—everything swept away and ended. It was the departure of everybody, even “the boys,” as Marion called them, Archie and Eddy, who had been the constant companions of “the girls” in all their walks and talks: quite enough to account for the dismal dullness which fell over these two unfortunate young women like a pall. Rosamond had not gone with her brother, partly because she was under her father’s orders to remain, and partly because a great fear of some discovery, she did not know what, which might be made after Eddy was gone, and for which he would need an advocate and champion on the spot, was in her mind. Eddy had so often wanted a defender ; there had been so often discoveries made after he had got himself out of reach of censure ; and it was so much more likely in this particular matter, which was disturbing the house, whatever it might be, that it was Eddy and not Archie who was to blame. Rosamond thought, with a little contempt of Archie, that it was so little likely he would be to blame. He had not spirit enough to go wrong. He was so tame, so unaccustomed to do anything—and to do something, even if it were wrong, seemed so much better than the nullity of such a limited life. It seemed to Rosamond that Eddy, who was always in scrapes, always doing something, and mostly wrong things, was twenty times more interesting than the other, but far more likely to be the author of this trouble which hung so heavy on the house than Archie was. It seemed to the experienced sister that something was sure to happen in a day or two to prove this ; to bring back Archie and place her in her accustomed position as her brother’s defender. That anticipation, and a deep knowledge of the dreariness of the London house, all shut up and dusty, with the dreadful ministrations of the charwoman, and the gloom of the closed rooms from which she could not escape to any cheerfulness of a club, kept her in Rosmore, though she was exceedingly tired of it and of the society of Marion, now her chief companion. They

were as unlike each other as girls could be. Rosamond's aspirations were not perhaps very lofty, but that hope of departing from all the conventionality (as she thought) of life, and setting up with Mabel Leighton in lodgings like two young men, to work together at whatever fantasy might be uppermost, was an opening at least to the imagination which Marion's limited commonplace had no conception of. Marion thought of the glories of the coming spring, of going to Court and the dress she should wear, and the suitors who would come to her feet. That duke!—she had not made acquaintance with any dukes, and wondered whether there was one young enough and free, so as to realize Eddy's prophecy. She did not even know that all that information could be acquired from *Debrett*, nor was there a *Debrett* in the house, had she been aware of its qualities. The duke was a sort of Prince Charming,—always possible. If it could only come about by any combination of fortune that Eddy should turn out to be one! but that was a contingency which Marion knew to be impossible, and upon which she did not suffer herself to dwell.

It was in reality a sign of her simplicity and unsophisticated mind that she gave herself up so unhesitatingly to this dream. Rosamond knew a great deal better: she knew for one thing that there was no duke in the market—a fact hidden from poor Marion—and that suitors do not precipitate themselves at the feet even of a rich young woman in society, unless she is a fabulously rich young woman. Rosamond was also much too experienced to imagine for a moment, as the simple Marion did, that whatever Archie had done he would be summarily disinherited and all his advantages handed over to his sister. There had been a row, Rosamond was aware, but it would pass over as rows did in families, and the son would have his natural place, and May would but be a prettyish underbred girl the more, with a good deal of money, but not that fabulous fortune which alone works miracles. Rosamond did not think very highly of Marion's chances; and all that she thought about Archie was a hope that her father might not see him and build any plans upon him in respect to herself.

While, however, the girls, in waterproofs, took occasional walks together, not knowing how to make conversation, two creatures speaking different languages, and found time hang very heavy on their hands—indoors the elder pair also passed the days heavily, with an absence of all meaning and motive in their life, such as aggravates every trouble. It is always a difficult matter for a man who has led a busy life, full of work and its excitements, to settle down in the country, especially if he has no estate to manage,—nothing to do, as people say, but enjoy himself. And no doubt this first setting in of winter and the virtual separation from the world caused by the persistent bad weather, would have been, under any circumstances, a trial of James Rowland's cheerfulness and patience. But enhanced

as this was by the horror and shame of such a discovery—one that turned the wavering balance of disappointment and hope, sometimes swaying to one side and sometimes to the other, into an immovable bar of sharp despair and bitter rage against his only son, the unworthy and shameless boy who had left him so little in doubt as to his character and qualities—the effect was terrible. Sometimes Evelyn persuaded him to go out with her down the glistening gravel paths towards the woods, or even to the Manse and the village: for he now loathed “the view” which he had loved, and avoided that favourite peep of Clyde, as if it had a voice to taunt him with the disappointment of his hopes. The minister and his wife received them indeed with open arms, with the cordial “Come away in’ of Scotch hospitality, and brewed, or rather “masked” (or perhaps Mrs. Dean, an advanced person, “infused”) the genial tea, and spread the steaming scones, which are a simple (and inexpensive) substitute for the fatted calf, gone out of fashion, for those rare guests. “Indeed, I thought we were never to see you again,” said the minister’s wife, not without a touch of offence. And when Evelyn put forward a hesitating excuse as to the bad weather, the west-country lady took her up a little sharply. “Lady Jean used never to mind. We are well used to the rain here, and it does no harm. You just put on a waterproof and you are quite safe. Indeed, I have heard people from the South say that though we have a great deal of rain, it’s very rare to find a day that you can’t go out sooner or later.”

“Mrs. Rowland will think, my dear,” said the minister, “that you are less glad to see her now than to upbraid her with not coming before.”

“That means that I am interfering with his department,” said Mrs. Dean. “I will not do that; and indeed, I have not seen you since the ball. Such a success as it was! I have seen very grand doings in the old times, when Lord Clydesdale had more heart to make a stir.”

“What was it that took away his heart?” said Rowland; “the old reason—want of money, I suppose?” It revived a little spirit in him, and the impulse of wealth to plume itself on its own advantages when he heard of this. It pleased him to think that he could do so easily without feeling it at all, what had cost Lord Clydesdale an effort which he no longer cared to take.

The Deans, husband and wife, regarded the other pair before them with that mild disdain which people in society feel for those who do not know everything that everybody knows about the families and persons who form the “world.” They were not perhaps exactly in society themselves, but they did know at least about the Clydesdale family and all that had happened to them. “It was not precisely want of money,” Mr. Dean said cautiously, “though we all know, more’s the pity, that they are not rich.”

"Oh! nonsense, Alexander," said his wife, "as if everybody didn't know the whole story! It might be a struggle, but they always held up their heads, and never made a poor mouth. What it was that took the heart out of the Earl was a great disappointment in his family. Young Lord Gourock was a very fine boy: you would never have thought it of him, but he just fell into the hands of some woman. That's the great danger with young lads of family. You must surely have heard of it?"

"You forget that we have been in India, both of us, for years," Evelyn said quickly.

"Ah! that would account for it: but even in India these things are known, among—" Mrs. Dean was about to say the right kind of people—but she remembered to have heard that Mrs. Rowland *was* a lady—one of the Somethings of Northamptonshire—and forbore. "At all events," she said, "it was well known here. I wonder you have not heard the whole story from Miss Eliza. She is a very clever person at finding out, and she always knows every detail, but all in the kindest spirit. I have always had a warm heart for poor young Gourock myself. He was such a nice boy! I believe his father and Lady Jean don't even know where he is," she added in a lower voice.

"Oh," said the minister, "they will easily find out where he is when he is wanted. You can always trace a man with a handle to his name."

"When he has to come to take up the succession—which will be great comfort to his poor father!" said Mrs. Dean scornfully. "But this," she added, "is but a melancholy kind of conversation: and your ball was just beyond everything—such luxury—and the decorations—and the band—and—"

Even Evelyn could scarcely bear any more, and Rowland did not even pretend to pay any attention; he put away the scones (though they were excellent) with a gesture that looked like disgust, and listened most impatiently to something the minister had to say about the Teinds, and the earnest need of an augmentation, and the objections of the heritors to do anything. He had a vague sense that money was wanted, and that he himself might get free if he made a large offer. "If there is anything I can do, command me," he said. "I may not be of much use in other ways, but so far as money goes—Evelyn, don't you think we should go before the rain comes on?"

"But you have had no tea!" said the minister's wife, "and the sky is clearing beautifully over the hills, which is just the quarter the rain comes from. Let Mrs. Rowland finish her tea."

"We must be going," said Rowland, and he went out first, leaving his wife to follow. He said nothing till they had walked far along the edge of the bay, and were once more in Rosmore woods, in a path overhung with low trees, from which occasionally came a big cold drop on their faces or on their shoulders.

He had put his arm within his wife's according to his usual fashion, and half-pushed her before him in the preoccupation of his thoughts. At last he spoke. He had made little or no reply to her remarks, scarcely wishing, it seemed, to hear them as they came along.

"It will just be some vile woman that has got possession of him," he said abruptly, "like yon young lord."

"Oh, James, we know nothing. I don't believe that he is guilty at all."

"Some vile woman," he repeated, "just like yon young lord." It seemed to give him a sort of comfort that it was like the young lord. Is it not indeed a kind of terrible comfort always to hear of other cases worse than our own ?

"I won't repeat what I said," said Evelyn, "but you know what I think."

"Think !—think !" he said impatiently, "of what use is thinking ? The thing's done : it was not done without hands. It will perhaps be something in the house."

"Something in the house !"

"Well !" he said querulously, "you need not repeat what I say. I have heard of a curse upon a house, and that nothing throve that ever was in it." He paused with an effort, and then said with his hard laugh, "I am speaking like a fool, but people used to believe in that in the old times. What's that fellow wanting ?" he added angrily, "a man from the stables ! What right has he to speak to you ?"

It was Sandy the groom, who touched his cap, and stood on the edge of the path, desiring an audience. Sandy had no fear of being supposed impertinent. He had spoken to Lady Jean, whenever he met her, with the familiarity of a respect which required no proof, and he regarded Mrs. Rowland, who had shown claims to a similar treatment, with much of the same confident and friendly feeling. Accordingly, he paid no attention to his master's threatening looks ("The auld man was in a very ill key : he was giving it to her, het and strong, puir leddy" was his after comment). "It's just auld Rankin, mem," said Sandy, who spoke a little thick, turning over his words like a sweet morsel under his tongue, as the minister said in his prayer, "he's awfu' anxious just to have a word wi' your leddyship."

"Old Rankin !" said Evelyn surprised, "a word with me ?"

"What do you want with Mrs. Rowland ?" cried Rowland angrily ; "do you think she has time to go after every fool in the place ? You can tell your wants to me."

"Oh, ay, sir, I could do that," said Sandy, "but it's no you he's wanting, it's the leddy—he's terrible keen to see the leddy. We wad be nae satisfaction to him, neither you nor me."

"Tell him I'll come and see him," said Evelyn hurriedly. "You know he is a very uncommon person, James. I will just walk with you as far as the house, and then I will come back."

"You had better go now," he said, loosing his arm. "You are getting like all the other Rosmore people, taking every crow for a dove. I can go home very well by myself."

"But, James!—"

He waved his hand to her, walking quickly away. Her company was a consolation; and then to be without her company was a relief. He had got to that restless stage.

"It's just the gospel truth," said Sandy, "the maister would have been nae comfort to the auld man. It's just the leddy, the leddy, he's been deaving us a' with the haill day."

"Is he ill, Sandy?"

"Na, nae waur than usual. He's very frail, but nae waur nor usual. Hey, Janet, here's the leddy. She's just coming, and I had nae trouble with her ava."

The cold drops on the trees came in a little deluge over Evelyn as she crossed the little glen under the ash tree: she was half amused in the midst of her trouble by the summons, thinking it might be a demand for some comfort, or a complaint of some inconvenience which was about to be made to her, things to which she had been accustomed in the country life of old. Rankin lay as usual with his picturesque head and beard rising from the mass of covering. He held out the large hand with which he fished in the nest beside him for puppies, and gave it to Evelyn to shake.

"I am sorry to hear you are not well," she said.

"Oh, I'm just in my ordinar'," said Rankin, "naething to brag of, but naething to find fault with either—just warstling on as pleases the Lord, and I dinna complain. Give the leddy a chair, Janet woman, and just go ben the house yoursel, and bring me particular word what the thermometer was last night. You can take a pencil and a bit of paper and write it down, for I'm very particular to have the figures exact."

"Oh, you needna make any of your fuil's errands for me," said Janet. "I ken what you mean weel enough," and the brisk little wife went away, carefully shutting the door behind her. What did he mean? Evelyn grew a little alarmed in spite of herself.

"I hear, mem," said Rankin, confidentially leaning towards her out of his bed, "that you're in some trouble at the Hoose?"

"You hear—that we're in trouble!" cried Evelyn in the last astonishment. "If we are," she said, "which I don't allow, you would not expect me to come and speak of it to you."

"Wherefore no?" said Rankin. "Do you think, madam, that because I'm held fast here, I'm no a man with sympathies, and a heart to feel for my neebors? You'll maybe think I'm taking too much upon me, calling the like of you my neebors. But it was One greater than any of us that did that. We're a' neebors in the sight of God."

"That is quite true, no doubt," said Evelyn, with a gleam of

faint amusement in the midst of her trouble, "but I don't know—"

"Madam," said Rankin, "I would take it very ill if ye kent something to my advantage or that would maybe save a heart-break, and keepit it to yoursel'."

"I hope I would not do so in any circumstances," said Evelyn.

"I think you wad not, and therefore I'm fain to speak. I'm a real observant person, and given to muckle study of my fellow-creatures. I've taken a great notion of you, Mistress Rowland. My opinion is that you're no the step-mother familiar to us in fiction, but a person with a real good meaning towards your good gentleman and all belonging to him."

"I hope so," said Evelyn, half-amused, half-disturbed, by this strange address.

"And we've heard you're in trouble up bye, and Mr. Archie, a fine quiet lad, sent out o' the house in disgrace."

"Mr. Rankin," said Evelyn, "you really must excuse me for saying that any gossip about my house—"

He held up his hand, bidding her to silence, and made a gesture as of putting her back in her chair. "Whisht," he said, "never mind that;" then bending forward, in a tone so low as to be almost a whisper: "It's a' lees," he said, "it's not true; it's just a' a parcel of lees."

"What do you know about it?" cried Evelyn, greatly excited. "For God's sake, if you know anything, tell me," she added, forgetting her precautions in the shock. What use was there in pretending that his information was not correct? He did not ask anything: he knew.

"I will do that," said Rankin. "There is a young gentleman at the house that is called Mr. Sawmaries, a very queer name."

"Saumarez—yes—but he is gone."

"Oh, he is gone? to rejoin the ither no doubt. I might have expected that."

"What other?" cried Evelyn, in great excitement.

"There was another," said Rankin, "but not at the house; not a person, maadam, to be presented to you—though I was muckle astonished to hear of him at the ball: but nae doubt he just slippit in, favoured by yon lad, when nobody was looking. Well, as I was saying, there was another, a shabby creature, just a bit little disreputable Jew, or something of that kind. What gave me a kind of insight into the Saumarez lad (that was a clever laddie and no an ill callant, but ill guided) was his trying to foist off this creature upon me as Maister Johnson of St. Chad's—a mistaken man and very confused in his philology, but still, I have nae reason to doubt, a gentleman, and maybe a kind of scholar too, in his way."

"Johnson! yes: but I have seen him; he was asked to the ball: I never doubted—"

"Na, mem," said Rankin, "I could swear ye doubted; but

being a real lady, and no suspicious as the like of me is always, you couldna believe he was cheating. He might mean it only as a kind of a joke, ye never can tell with these callants. But, maadam, this is all very indifferent and not to the purpose ; what I'm wanting to tell is, that there was something going on that was no building kirks between these young men."

Evelyn was not acquainted with the figurative language of the humble Scot, but she divined what he meant. She made a hurried gesture of entreaty that he would go on. "Well ! that's just about all I know ; there was something the one wanted and the other was loathe to give. The shabby body was just full of threats, and no blate about saying them before me, a stranger ; and young Saumarez, he was holding off, trying his jokes, and to take his attention with the dowgs and various devices. And syne they went out of my house in close colloquy. The wife is not a woman of much book-learning, but she has a wonderful judgment. She said to me, when she came in from showing them to the door, 'Take you my word, John Rankin,' says she, 'if there's ony mischief comes to pass, thaet twa will have the wyte of it,' which agreed entirely with my ain precognition. I wouldna say but we thought of mair vulgar crimes, being of the practical order ourselves. And I hear the trouble's about a cheque, whether stolen or what I cannot tell. But my advice to you, maadam, as one educated person with another, is—just look for it there."

"Eddy !" Evelyn said below her breath, "Eddy !" Long before Rankin's speech had come to an end, her quick mind had realized the shock, felt it to the bottom of her heart, staggered out of the course of her thoughts for a moment in sheer dismay and horror ; then, with a sudden spring of intellectual power quickened by pain, had returned to the simple question. Eddy ! Eddy ! who had been so sympathetic, so affectionate, such true feeling in his eyes, such real zeal for the house, so good to James, so generous about Archie. Ah ! generous ! then she began to think and remember. If Rankin was right, he had introduced that man on a false pretence to her house, and it had been difficult to her to realize that Eddy was really so sympathetic. And surely there were things he had said ! Her head began to buzz and ache with the rapid throng of thoughts, thoughts half understood, half seen only in the hurry and rush of bewildering and confusing suggestion. The old gamekeeper went on talking, but she did not hear him, and he perceived what processes he had set in motion, and for a moment was silent too.

"There is just one thing, mem," he said, "before you go,"—when Evelyn rose, still bewildered, wading through the chaos of her own thoughts. "The night o' the ball—there's aye een on the watch in a house like yours—the body Johnson disappeared as soon as the gentleman arrived that came from the bank, him that arrived in a coach all the way round the land

road. There was one that saw him leave go of the leddy that was dancing with him—the nasty toad to daur to ask a leddy to dance!—and jump out of the window behind the curtain, and was never seen more. And Mr. Archie to get the wyte of it, a fine, ceevil, well-spoken young man! Na, na, we will not bide that. Just you look in that direction, Mistress Rowland, for there the true culprit's to be found."

"I will—I will think of what you say," cried Evelyn, faltering. "It is a dreadful light, but if it is a light— You are proud people, you Scotch, you don't like your own secrets to be exposed to all the world. And you don't know all the story, Rankin, only a bit of it. Stop these people talking! you can surely do it, you who are so clever; think how you would like it. And my husband, my poor husband!"

"I feel for Maister Rowland," said Rankin, "but a house with a score of servants a' on the watch, how are ye to keep a thing secret? There are nae secrets in this world. If there's a thing ye wish to keep quiet, that's just the thing the haill countryside will jabber about. I'll do what I can. I'll do what I can," he added hurriedly, "but the only thing to stop it is to bring the lad hame."

## CHAPTER XL

WHEN Evelyn returned to the house she found her husband engaged with a visitor—no less a person than Sir John Marchbanks—who had some works going on near Kilrossie, drainages and such like, on which he was very anxious to have Mr. Rowland's opinion. And Rowland, recalled to himself by a touch of the practical, had recovered his spirits and energy for the moment at least. He agreed to go and inspect the work, and to add to that kindness, as Sir John said, with a little pompous politeness, by staying to dinner afterwards, as country neighbours use. Evelyn had therefore no means of confiding Rankin's revelation to her husband, even had she wished; and she was not sure that she wished to do so. The whole matter wanted more thinking over than she could give it in the agitated walk home and the hurried interval before he left with his visitor to walk to Kilrossie and see the works. "I warn you, Mrs. Rowland, that I will keep him as long as I can," said Sir John. "We have great schemes of public work before us in the peninsula, and there is nobody here whose opinion is worth a button in comparison with his."

"I shall make no objection; it will do him good," said Evelyn: but she followed her husband into the library, where he went for a moment to fetch some papers. "James," she said, with a little timidity, "may I send for Archie home?"

"May you send for—the devil!" said James Rowland. "What do you mean? What's the boy to you?"

"He is Mary's son—"

"You seem to think more of that," he said with his angry laugh, "than that he's mine—and has brought shame on my name."

"We don't know that; you cannot prove that. It is being talked of among the servants. Let me send for him. If he comes while you are away, it will be easier. Even if it were true," cried Evelyn, "you would have to forgive him some time, James."

"I am not so sure of that," said her husband, grimly. "Anyhow, he is gone, and there's an end—"

"There can never be an end. Let me write; let me send—"

"And do you think, you simple woman," said Rowland, "that a dour fellow like that, a lad that swore at me, and flew in my very face from the first, will come back for the holding up of your little finger?" He took her hand in his, with admiring affection; there was something like a gleam of moisture in his eyes. "It is a bonnie little finger," he said, "and a kind—and I would follow it over the world: but you must not think to triumph over a young brute like *yon*, as you do over me."

"Oh, James, you are mistaken; he is not, he is not—"

"What is he not? I wish he was not a son of mine," said the father, with darkening brow.

And he said nothing more, neither to forbid nor to permit. Perhaps there was an undercurrent in his heart of hope that she would try what that signal made with her little finger would do. He did not forbid it. His heart gave a heavy thump in his bosom at the proposal. She could do for them both what neither could do for himself—and if she might be right! Women, they say, have intuitions; perhaps she might be right! and the thundercloud might pass over, and he might yet live to believe, in time, that nothing had happened. But he shook his head as he went away. Anyhow, the little absence would be a good thing. It would break the spell of misery; he might be better able to think, to settle something that could be done, when he was away.

When the master of the house goes away, there is often a little sense of relief among the women, however beloved and prized he may be. It leaves them a great deal of freedom—freedom from the control of hours and seasons which, it is a law of the Medes and Persians, can never be infringed when he is at home. He may be no more punctual than the rest, but punctuality is imposed while he is there; and he may be as irregular as he pleases in his way, but the strictest regularity is enforced upon everybody else, out of respect to papa. When he goes away there is a little slackening all round. Perhaps the mistress lingers in her room in the morning, does not come

down to breakfast—and luncheon shades off into puddings and fruit instead of the copious meal of ordinary custom, or else is abolished altogether, the girls staying out, without warning, at some friendly neighbouring house. This was what happened at Rosmore on the morning after James Rowland's departure. His wife did not come down-stairs till it was late, feeling herself more safe to carry on her own thoughts in the seclusion of her own room, and when she appeared at lunch, Marion's chair was empty, and Rosamond, alone, appeared to share that meal. The conversation languished between the two ladies, each of whom had questions to ask, which could not be put as long as Saunders and his satellite were in the room.

"I hope you have heard from Eddy," Mrs. Rowland said.

"Oh, yes, I have heard from him. He has got back all right," said Rosamond.

And then there was a silence, broken only by Evelyn's recommendation of the pudding, which was one of Mrs. Wright's best.

"Is your brother—very lonely, with nobody at home?" at length she said again.

"Eddy is never lonely, he has such heaps of friends; when one set is not in town, he falls back on another. When there's no opera, there's a music-hall—that sort of thing," said Rosamond.

"I am afraid that means he is not very particular."

"Not particular at all, so long as he is amused."

"But that, unfortunately, my dear, is not the best rule in life."

"Oh, I never thought it was a rule at all," said Rosamond. "If it were, Eddy would detest it, you may be sure. He likes to do—what no one else does, or what he has never done before."

"Did you know this Mr. Johnson—or some such name—Rosamond, whom he brought here?"

"Oh, Mrs. Rowland," cried the girl, "I hope you will forgive him! He is such a little wretch for that. It must have been one of his silly practical jokes to bring that man here."

"It is not the sort of practical joke which will get him friends," said Evelyn seriously; the man was gone, and the embargo was removed. "He ought not to have brought him here. And did *you* know him, Rosamond?"

"I know him! but I know this, that Eddy told me not to dance with him; and I will say this much for Eddy," said Rosamond, with a hot blush, "that he warned Marion too."

"But both of you—"

"Yes, it is true. I did—that nobody might say I left my brother in the lurch—offered to dance when I saw him standing there, Eddy taking no notice. Even a—beast—like that, if you get him asked, you ought to be civil to him." Rosamond's cheeks were flushed, and she held her head very high. "But

Marion did it out of contradiction, because he had told her not——”

“There is not much to commend in the whole matter,” said Evelyn, with a sigh. “But I think, on the whole, you were the least wrong. And has he dealings with people like these? Would that man have been likely to get your brother—under his power?”

“I don’t know what you mean, Mrs. Rowland,” said Rosamond, with a glow on her cheeks.

“And yet it is plain enough, my dear. Is it possible that—about money or betting or anything of the kind, Eddy might have got under that man’s influence—in his power?”

Rosamond held her head higher than words could describe. “If you mean that he took money to introduce him into society——”

“I did not mean that,” said Evelyn in a parenthesis, but Rosamond did not pause to hear.

“——as some people do,” the girl went on. “Oh, the men one knows! There was Algy Holt, went about with an American, getting him asked out to places. Everybody knew it, and no one was so very severe! But if you think Eddy would do that, Mrs. Rowland! he may be silly—oh, I know he is! and spends money when he has not got it, and has to do all kinds of dreadful things to pay up;—but if you think he would do that——”

“My dear Rosamond, if you prefer to think it was a practical joke—but I don’t wish to be severe—I should like to know, if you know, what dreadful things he has to do to pay up, as you say?”

“Oh! he has to buy carriage-wheels, and cigar-holders, and pictures, and one time he had a lot of paving-stones——”

Evelyn, who was very much wound up by this time, expecting terrible revelations without thinking how very unlikely it was that Rosamond would be the confidant of any guilty practices—here burst into a fit of unsteady laughter.

“There is nothing very dreadful in all that: though it is very ridiculous, and, I dare say, a horrid imposition,” she said.

“It is enough to break one’s heart!” cried Rosamond, striking her hands together: “he borrows a certain sum and he gets the half of it or less, and that—and then he has to pay back the whole—— Oh, how awful it is to be poor! for there is no end to it—it is going on for ever. And when he gets Gilston, he will have to sell it, and where will he be then? He sees it as well as I, but what can he do? Of course,” added Rosamond, drying her eyes, which were shining with fierce tears, “if he could marry somebody with a great deal of money, it might all come right.”

This was all that she got from Rosamond, with much sense of guilt in thus endeavouring to persuade the sister into betrayal of the brother’s secrets. And presently Marion returned, who

had been amusing herself at Miss Eliza's house with the young people there, and came back escorted by a large party, for whom it was necessary to provide tea and amusement till the early darkness had fallen. Evelyn, who could not rest, and who felt that the two or three days of her husband's absence was all the time she had at her disposal to solve this problem in, threw a shawl over her head and followed the merry party down the avenue, when Marion re-escorted them to the first gate. She could not have told what help she expected to get from Marion, and yet it was possible that some spark might fall from the girl's careless discourse. She met her coming quickly back, her white and pink cheeks glowing with the cold and the fun, echoes of which had scarcely yet died on the frosty air. It was almost dark, though a gray light still lingered in the sky, and the lamps were shining on the other side of the water in the villages and scattered houses along the opposite shore.

"Mamma!" cried Marion,—a flush of anxiety came upon her face, though it was scarcely visible—"did you hear how they were going on? But you must not think it was my fault."

"I heard nothing," said Evelyn, to Marion's evident relief; "but I came out—to speak to you.—Have you heard anything of—your brother?"

"Archie?—oh, no," said the girl. "He would not write to me, for he would know I could not approve of him, when he has gone like that and affronted papa."

"Like what?" said Mrs. Rowland anxiously.

"Oh!" said Marion, with a pause for reflection,—"well, just like that! The servants have got a story that it's about money, but Archie is not a spender, and I don't know how it could be about money. But if papa has turned him out of the house, it could not be without reason, and that is enough for me."

This was true enough and yet was not true, for Marion secretly had made a great many more investigations about Archie than anybody knew; and was quite aware where he was, and that Aunt Jean was profoundly indignant, and considered, as was not unnatural, that the whole matter was the stepmother's doing from beginning to end.

"I have written to him," said Evelyn, "but he has not replied. My dear, you are his only sister; you ought to help to make it up. Will you write to him and beg him to come home?"

"But I would maybe be flying in papa's face if I did that."

"Your father would not blame you. Don't you see he is very unhappy?—his only son! May, you are prejudiced against me, both of you. It is perhaps not unnatural; never mind that; but try and help me with Archie, to bring him back—to bring him home."

"And how am I to know," said Marion, "that it is not just to ruin me too with papa, and get me sent away as well, that you are giving me that advice?"

Evelyn had derived much temporal advantage from her union

with James Rowland. She had been made the mistress of a great house, with much authority and surrounded with honour, instead of a poor dependent woman ; but she paid for it dearly in this moment, while the girl stood with her little impudent head lifted, discharging this little poisoned arrow straight into Mrs. Rowland's heart.

There was a moment of intense silence, to which all the dulling influences of nature—the night, the frost, the darkness—gave additional effect. The panting of Evelyn's breath, which she could not conceal, was the only sound. Marion was cool as the air and entirely self-possessed, waiting to see how her missile told, and noting with triumph that quickened breath.

"Of course after these words I can ask nothing more of you," said Mrs. Rowland when she had attained the command of her own voice.

"Oh, I was not meaning to be disagreeable," said Marion lightly ; "but as I have nobody to take care of me, I am just obliged to take care of myself. In an ordinary way I will just do whatever you bid me, mamma : but when it's to commit myself with papa, that is different. He might get the idea that both his children were turning upon him. And I will not do that, not for Archie or any person. Every herring," said Marion sententiously, with a recollection of her Aunt Jean's wise sentiments, "must just hang by its own head."

"It is time to go in, I think," said Mrs. Rowland shivering ; her cold, however, was moral rather than physical. This cautious, much regarding young person of nineteen bewildered all her elder ideas. Was it pure selfishness, or was it some recondite covering of affection to scare the unfamiliar gazer ? Evelyn made a movement aside to let the uncomprehended being pass before her into the house.

And it may be supposed that the evening circle formed by these three was not very sympathetic. Mrs. Rowland was full of the most painful uncertainty as to what she should do : or rather what could she do ? she asked herself. Nothing but proof would content or in any way move her husband : and how was proof to be had, and what would move Archie, who would probably resent the very evidence which exonerated him, feeling it almost an additional grievance ? What was she to do among all these conflicting objects ? The natural thing, as it would have appeared to most women in her circumstances, would have been to sit still and wait, and do nothing. No one desired her interposition, not even her husband, who had laughed over the impotence of that little finger which she thought Archie would have obeyed. A reasonable woman does not like to be told, however tenderly, that she thinks she can move the world by the signal of her little finger. Would it not, she asked herself, be more dignified, more seemly to keep silence, and be patient and wait ? But then, on the other hand, there was the possibility that the crime would sink into the pit of the

undiscovered and never be found out. It had not even the chance of being found out which thorough examination and search after the criminal would give. Rowland had adopted it, homologated it, as the Scotch lawyers say, accepted the false cheque as his own to save his son : so that no questions could be asked at the bank to throw light upon the manner in which it was drawn, or the person from whom it came. If she only dared to go there herself to find out ! if she only might venture to make certain inquiries !—but it was impossible. Archie was not to be appealed to, for he would not stir a step to clear himself. What then could she do ? she who alone possessed a clue. And then what a clue was that, the supposition of a servant, the inferences of a half-instructed person, half-acquainted with the story ! She sat through the long evening, pretending to read, in the great drawing-room, which was full of ruddy firelight and lamplight, the most sheltered and warm and cheerful place, while the wind blew fierce outside. In the inner room, Rosamond was playing chords upon the piano in a kind of grand but simple symphony, while Marion, by the table, in the light of the lamp, in a white dress, with a face not unlike a flower, insignificant but pretty, a little thing, innocent and simple, to all external appearances, the ideal of guileless youth —sat working at a piece of bright coloured “fancy work,” as she called it. Who could have dreamt that so dark a problem lay between them, and that the question, what to do in so complex a matter, involving so much, should be rending in sunder the heart of the dignified and graceful mistress of the house ?

“Mamma !” said Marion softly. It may be supposed that Mrs. Rowland was not particularly disposed at this moment to hear any such appeal, and silence fell again on the party, broken only by the low but splendid rumble of the long-drawn notes.

“Mamma !” said Marion again. She edged her chair a little closer, and gave a look over her shoulder towards the piano, where Rosamond sat unseen. “Did you ever think of asking Mr. ——, her brother, about that cheque ?”

“What cheque ?” said Mrs. Rowland coldly.

“Oh,” said Marion, “it is all over the parish that it was a cheque, and the servants all know. If I were you, as you take so great an interest, I would just ask Eddy. He knows a lot of things.”

“I do not see how he could know what is your father’s business.”

“Hush, you needn’t speak so loud ! he knows a lot of things,” said Marion, with a little sigh. “He is far, far cleverer than Archie. He might find out. If it were me, I would ask him,” the girl said.

“Your brother’s interests,” said Evelyn quietly, “are surely your business as much as mine.”

"I am not saying," said Marion, "one way or another: but just it is him that I would ask if it were me."

"About what—about what?" cried Evelyn, pressing her hands together. "If you know anything, tell me at least, what he has to do with it? What can I find out from him? what—"

"She has stopped playing," said Marion, and she added with a little severity, "You will see, if you think, that whether or no — it's best she should not hear."

They said good-night to her shortly after, kissing her both of them, according to the formula which girls are trained to go through: and went up-stairs, one after the other, slim girlish creatures, innocent neophytes in life, as one would have thought, devoid of its saddening knowledge, its disenchanting experiences —leaving behind them a woman who had seen much sorrow and trouble, yet who was less acquainted than either of them, it seemed, with certain mysteries and problems.

May left her in a state of agitation and excitement, such as Evelyn had not yet known in the trials of her own life. She felt that Archie's future was in her hands, though he rejected her interposition so bitterly; and what was more, her husband's future, the happiness of the good man who had so much trust in her. If she could restore his son to him and did not, because of any reluctance of hers, any shrinking from exertion, and mean or secondary feeling, as for instance, that no one would be grateful to her for what she did, how unworthy would that be. Gratitude! what is gratitude but a repayment, the return for which no generous spirit looks. It is as mercenary to insist upon gratitude as upon money or any other recompense. What would it matter if no one ever knew, if no one ever said, "Thank you?" What was that when Archie's young life, and still closer and dearer, her good husband's happiness, were at stake?

Evelyn walked about the drawing-room for a long time with her hands clasped, and her head bent, and thoughts pursuing thoughts, a host of quickly succeeding and often conflicting resolutions and questionings, hurrying through her mind. The butler, weary of waiting, peeped in by a half-open door, and retreated again, overawed by her absorption, which neither saw nor heard. Her maid up-stairs yawned and waited, astonished and indignant. She was not in the habit of keeping the household out of bed by any caprice of hers, and all the less could they excuse her for her forgetfulness now. It was almost midnight before she was roused with a start by the chiming of the clock, and hurrying out, found Saunders respectful, but displeased outside, to whom she proffered a hasty apology, which had to be repeated when her maid confronted her half asleep yet wholly indignant. For a ball, which the servants enjoy as much as their master, allowance may be made; but on a night when nothing was happening, when the master was away, and the ladies expected to be more easy to serve, less exacting,

keeping earlier hours than usual ! And next day consternation still more deep struck the house : for Mrs. Rowland went away, taking only a bag with her, and explaining briefly that she had business in London, but would be back on the third day. Rosamond proposed to go with her, and so did Marion. She only smiled at them both, and declared that she would be back again before they had packed their things. She did not even take her maid ! which was a sort of insult to the house. A mistress who can "do" for herself, who can travel unattached, and dress her own hair, etc., is a disappointment in a house like Rosmore.

She went away on Tuesday, and late on Wednesday night James Rowland came home, a day or two earlier than he had been expected. To describe his astonishment and disappointment when he arrived, and found her gone, is more than words are capable of. He had almost turned back from his own door and disappeared again into the darkness, from which he had looked out with such a rising of comfort and happiness in his home-coming, and of hope for what might have happened while he was away. "Mrs. Rowland not at home !" he said, stumbling across his own threshold as though the place was strange to him : "why, you must be dreaming," but Saunders would not be driven from his explanation. The mistress had received news that she had to act upon at once, and the master being away, she had gone up to London instead of him, Saunders supposed. She expected to be home on Friday at the latest, which was the day on which he too was expected home. Rowland appeared at the dinner-table, to the great astonishment of the girls, and with a countenance of disgust and impatience difficult to describe. "So she has left you planted," he said with a sharp laugh. It was impossible, indeed, that a man could return home much wanting his wife, calculating upon her, and find her gone, without feeling himself an injured man. He called Marion into the library after and questioned her. "Where has she gone ? What has come over her ? There is not a line, not a word to explain."

"She was going to London on business—whatever that may mean," said Marion. "She did not open her lips to me."

"But at least you know where she is gone ?"

"Papa," said Marion, "you can have observed very little if you have not observed that mamma does not give her confidence to me."

"Oh, confound your confidence. Where is my wife ?" Rowland cried.

"I do not know," said Marion primly. She added after a moment, *staccato*—"But I might give a guess : she was awfully taken up—about Archie, papa."

He uttered a sort of groan, looking fiercely at her, not missing a shade of meaning in Marion's face.

"And she wanted me to interfere : but I just said that what

papa decided must be right, and I would have nothing to do with it—against you. And then she was in great thought—Did you ever hear, papa, that before she was married, mamma and Mr. Saumarez, *their* father, were great friends?"

"What has that to do with it?" he cried angrily.

"Well—there was some story, Eddy always said, and he used to laugh; but he never would tell me right out: and he said he could make her do whatever he liked on that account. And last night she asked Rosamond a great many questions about when he was coming home and so forth, and I heard her say something about 'your father's advice.'"

James Rowland sprang to his feet with the suppressed roar of feeling, which in men of his kind does duty for the sigh or outcry of milder natures. There was something of the wild beast in it,—an impulse of rage, almost frenzy. Advice with that man on *his* affairs! take that vile cynic, that false traitor, that diseased atom into her confidence on her husband's decent concerns! His looks terrified his daughter; and as he paced about the room up and down, Marion took advantage of the first occasion on which he turned his back to her to escape. But Rowland did not even remark that she was gone. Oh, Evelyn! Evelyn! whom he trusted to the bottom of his heart, had she gone to expose the secrets of his house, his shame, and the breaking of his heart to *that* man! This shaft went to his very soul.

## CHAPTER XLI

EVELYN arrived in London on a dark morning of early November, having travelled all night; but she scarcely so much as thought of her fatigue and still less of the heavy yellow atmosphere, as she drove to the hotel where she had lived with her husband on their first arrival in England, when she knew nothing of the difficulties that were to rise like lions in her way. It had been June then, and everything was fresh and fair. And though even then she had thought with apprehension of the children, wondering whether they would receive her with prejudice, or what she could do to disarm opposition, no thought of anything more serious than the little contrarieties of household intercourse had ever come into her mind. What floods of experience, unthought of, unexpected, had come upon her since that time. Now she had learned to know herself and others, to realize a hundred dangers and difficulties which never had appeared upon her horizon before. Nothing that had happened in her previous life could have made it seem possible to her that she should come back again alone to London, on a sort of detective enterprise in the interests of her husband's son—who did not love, but distrusted and feared her, though she had thus

dared the very real dangers of her husband's displeasure and her own uneasy sense of unfitness and incapacity, on his behalf. She had thought and thought during the long sleepless night, turning the matter over in every possible view ; sometimes appalled at her own hardihood in making such a venture ; sometimes feeling that it was the only course she could have pursued ; sometimes with a cold shade of self-distrust, asking herself how she could have undertaken it at all, how she could hope to carry it out. And, unfortunately, the more Evelyn thought, the stronger became this latter sentiment : how she was to find Eddy ; how she was to begin such an inquiry ; how she could put it to him in so many words that it was he who was guilty and not Archie. She had not entered with herself into these details until she had committed herself to this attempt. The question before had been, should she do it ? should she take this chance of enlightenment ? should she try at least what seemed the only way of attaining any certainty ? It had seemed to her before she started that she had but to be brought face to face with Eddy, to appeal to him and his better impulses in order to know. "If you can throw any light upon it," she had meant to say ; "if you know anything !" And it did not occur to her that he would hesitate to reply. He was lazy, light, unsettled, uncertain—badly trained, poor boy, without much moral sense, not careful to discriminate between right and wrong ; but yet at the bottom of all a gentleman, with an instinctive sense of loyalty and truth. The difficulty at first was merely that of going, finding him, venturing upon the solitary journey, acting in her husband's absence, without his knowledge : all of them very appalling things—for she had never been accustomed to act for herself in any practical emergency, although well enough accustomed to passive endurance of things she could not mend. The sudden sense that here was a thing which perhaps she could mend by sudden action had at first taken away her breath. It had seemed to her inexperience a mighty thing to do, to start off to London all by herself in James's absence, as if she were running away. It looked like waiting till he was gone, and then taking advantage ! She laughed at the suggestion, yet held her breath at the strange risk. He might think—and yet more, the servants might think, who were so apt to find out everything, and a great deal more than there was to find out. These conflicting thoughts had kept her mind in a ferment of anxiety, until she had actually taken that great step and started. And then they had dropped suddenly and given place to a new kind of trouble.

How was she to bring Eddy Saumarez to the bar, to put him to the question, to ask him to incriminate himself or his friends, to demand—What do you know ? This new side of the matter rose up as soon as she had fairly begun her journey, and caught her by the throat. The face of Eddy rose before her in the partial darkness behind the veiled lamp of the compartment in

which she travelled alone. Oh, not an easy face to confront, to over-awe, to reach the meaning of! A face that could pucker into humorous lines, that could put on veils of assumed incomprehension, that could look satirically amused, or innocently unconscious, or wildly merry, as it pleased! "What could make you think, dear Mrs. Rowland, that I knew anything?" he would say; or, "It is too delightful that you should have such an opinion of my insight;" or, perhaps, "You know I never learned the very alphabet of Archie, and how can I tell what he would do?" Such expressions she had heard from him often on other subjects, upon which he could baffle her smilingly, looking in her face all the time. And how could she hope to keep him to the point now, to bring him to a serious answer, to convince him of the importance of the position and the need there was that he should speak? In the middle of the journey her courage had so evaporated that she had almost determined to return again without making this unhopeful attempt. But there are always as many, or perhaps more, difficulties in the way of going back than there are in going forward, and Evelyn felt that she had committed herself too much to make it possible that she should go back. She drove to the hotel, and had her bath and changed her dress, and swallowed hurriedly that cup of tea which is the only sustenance possible in a moment of anxiety to so many women. And then she walked from the hotel to the insignificant fashionable street in which the house of Mr. Sau-marez was. It was a small house, though the locality was irreproachable, and the blinds of the first floor were all carefully drawn down, though there were indications of life in the other parts. Evelyn's knock was answered after a considerable interval by the old woman, caretaker or charwoman, who was left in charge when "the family" were absent. "Mr. Edward?" she said; "Mr. Eddy?—yes'm, he's at 'ome; but he's not up yet, and won't be this three or four hours."

"Oh!" Evelyn was so startled in her breathless expectancy that she could scarcely answer this, which was half a disappointment and more than half a relief. There are moments when a brief postponement, even of the thing we most desire, is a certain ease to the strained faculties. She asked at what time Eddy would be visible and went away, turning towards Kensington Gardens, where she thought she might be able to spend the time until she must return. The park, of course, was empty, and though Kensington Gardens had still that cheerful number of comers and goers, which marks the vicinity of a district in which people live the whole year round, it was not otherwise than a place of "retired leisure" as it generally is. She walked up and down under the tall, bare trees, which stood about like ghosts in the yellow atmosphere, and sat down here and there and waited, looking at her watch from time to time, looking at the groups of children, and the old people and young girls who were taking their morning walk,

and who looked at her with not much less curiosity than a stranger unknown calls forth in a village. She was not one of the *habitues*, and perhaps, she thought, some sense of the tumult in her soul might have stolen into the calm foggy air around her, and startled the quiet promenaders with a consciousness of an uneasy spirit in their midst. She would not have been remarked in the adjoining park, where uneasy spirits abound, and all kinds of strange meetings, interviews, and revolutions take place. When she had waited as she thought long enough, she went back again to Blank Street. "Oh, it's you again, Miss," said the old woman. "Master Edward's gone—I forgot to tell him as some one had been here ; and he went out in a hurry, for he was going out to 'is breakfast. I'm sure, Miss, I'm very sorry I forgot ; but he wouldn't have paid no attention, he was in such a hurry to get away."

Evelyn pressed her hands tightly together, as if she had been pressing her heart between them. She ceased to feel the relief : the sickening suspense and delay made the light for a moment swim in her eyes.

"I am very anxious to see him," she said. "At what time will he return ?"

"Oh, Miss, I can't tell," said the old woman. "Sometimes he'll come in to dress for dinner, sometimes not. I does for them in other ways, but not cooking, except just a cup of tea."

"At what time," said Evelyn ; "six or seven ? tell me ! I am very anxious to see him."

"Well, Miss, it's just a chance," the caretaker said.

And with this she was dismissed to wait the livelong day, with nothing to do, in that forced inaction which is the most miserable of all things. I do not know a more dreadful ordeal to go through than to go to a strange place upon one special mission, which is your only errand there, and not to be able to accomplish it, and to have a whole dreary day to get over in forced patience, until you can try again. Mrs. Rowland went back to the hotel, and spent the greater part of the day staring through the window, with some sort of hope that she might see Eddy's face, and be able to rush after him, and stop him in the midst of the crowd. At six o'clock she went back, and at seven, and at eight, walking about and about in the intervals, so as to keep the door in sight : but nobody came. It was not any attempt on Eddy's part to elude her, for he did not know anything about her. He did not come home on that evening to dine, that was all. The next day she waited until a later hour before she went. Alas ! he had gone out earlier on that particular morning ! The old woman had said that a lady from Scotland had been inquiring for him ; but he had flung away with a contemptuous outcry, "Confound all ladies from Scotland !" which Mrs. Jones was too polite to repeat. In the evening Evelyn had no better luck ; but she left her card with an entreaty pencilled upon it that he would come to see her in

her hotel, and sat through the evening watching for every step. But no one came. The third day was the day on which she ought to have gone home ; but it was impossible to go away now leaving this quest unaccomplished, whatever might happen. She wrote a hurried letter to her husband explaining something, though not all, and with a determined resolve that this day should not pass in the same inactivity, went out again. The old woman received her like an old acquaintance. "He's in, Miss, but he's in bed," she said. Evelyn stepped quickly into the house. "I must see him," she said. "Lawks, Miss!" said the woman, "you won't go up to a young gentleman in his bedroom." Evelyn only repeated "I must see him." She did not perceive an air of greater bustle and movement about the house. What was it to her who was there, if she could but see Eddy?

"My good woman," she said, "my business is very important. Mr. Saumarez has just left my house in the country, and something has happened that may hurt him—that may most seriously hurt him. Show me where his room is: I will take the responsibility on myself."

"Oh, Miss, it isn't my place to show in a lady. I couldn't do it ; I daren't do it : and you're too nice and too respectable for such a thing—oh, lady!" cried the old woman, as the visitor went on passing her. Evelyn met a man-servant on the stairs with a cup of soup in his hand. Except that he was a servant, and in a dark livery, she made no other note in respect to him. She said in the calm of the excitement which had now taken hold of her like a giant, "Tell me which is Mr. Edward's room."

"Mr. Edward's room ?—he is not up, madam," said the man.

"It does not matter ; I must see him—which is his room ?"

She was so determined that she pushed past him, quite pale, and with a desperation which the man, more experienced than the old charwoman, recognized. He followed her up-stairs, and opened a door. "If you will go in there, I will send him to you." It was a small sitting-room, Eddy's no doubt, from the pipes and foils and riding-whips and other mannish boyish articles that hung on the walls. Evelyn would have turned back when she saw that he was not there. "I am not to be foiled," she said; "I must see him; take me to his room, or else I will find it for myself !"

"Ma'am," said the man, "I know you're a lady and a friend of the family. I have seen you before. I give you my word I'll bring him to you, if you'll wait here."

She sat down and waited close by the open door. She was determined that he should not escape her, whatever his desire might be. The man, after a vain attempt to close the door upon her, opened the next door and went in. She heard the blinds drawn up, something said softly, then an astonished cry. At all events, whatever might come of it, she had at least secured her opportunity at last.

It was half an hour, however, before, after many movements and commotion in the next room, Eddy came forth hurried and breathless, with a face that looked old and wan in the light of the morning, a light he was not much accustomed to face. Poor little pale, old-young face, something between the shrivelled countenance of an old man and that of a pinched, unwholesome child! to think that he should not yet be of age, and yet wear that look: but Mrs. Rowland had no time for such reflections. She rose up quickly, just within the open door, and put out an eager hand. He might even now have escaped her, she felt, had she not been standing there, where he was obliged to pass; and his tremor and anxiety at the sight of her were evident. He cried, "Mrs. Rowland!" letting fall a book which was in his hand.

"Yes; I have come down direct from Scotland to speak to you. I have been three days trying to see you." She had scarcely breath enough to say so many words.

"The old woman," said Eddy, "told me something about a lady from Scotland; but I thought it bosh; she is such an old fool. I did not flatter myself there was any lady in Scotland who would take the trouble to come after me; and you, Mrs. Rowland—"

"You did not think of seeing me? Can you imagine no reason why I should come?" she said.

To Evelyn's astonishment—for her enigmatical question had really been put at pure hazard—Eddy's sallow and careworn face flushed over with a violent red, and then became more than sallow, cadaverous, and a cold moisture came out upon his forehead.

"Let me shut the door," he said, "it's cold; and can I order you anything: a cup of tea—breakfast? Ah!" he said with a laugh, "of course you've breakfasted hours ago; but I'm sure you will not mind if I order my tea: one wants it in a morning when one has been late over-night."

"You look—as if you had been very late over-night, Eddy."

"Oh, I acknowledge I was; who denies it?" said Eddy, with again an attempt at a laugh. "It's the nature of the beast: one minds one's manners, at a place like Rosmore; but in town one can't help one's self, not even when town's out of town, and it's only the *débris* that are left."

"You would have done better to stay at Rosmore," she said gently; "you do not look the same person."

"I am not the same person. Who would not be better there?" he said. And here he burst into an uneasy laugh. "You have not come at this hour in the morning, and dragged an unlucky wretch out of bed, only that we should exchange compliments about Rosmore?"

"No, indeed. I have a little history to give you, Eddy, and an appeal to make. You know, or you divined, I cannot tell which, something of what happened before you left?"

"The night of the ball?—oh, I divined: that is to say, I saw. A man does not arrive in hot haste at early midnight, when a ball is going on, and demand the master of the house; and the master of the house does not send in equal haste for his son, who is closeted with him for a long time, then comes out looking conscious and distracted, and finally disappears, without the instructed spectator forming an idea that something must have happened. I am a very instructed spectator, Mrs. Rowland. I have seen various things of the kind. The sons have disappeared for shorter or longer times, and the fathers have remained masters of the field. Here, Rogers, put it on this little table, and take away those things to eat. I want nothing but some tea."

There was a moment's pause, during which the little table was covered with a shining white polished cloth, which reflected the fire in a surface made semi-transparent by starch and borax and a glittering silver tea-pot placed upon it; which made a still warmer reflection in the foggy yellow of the morning air. Eddy poured himself out his tea with his usual air of easy composure, a little overdone. But this Mrs. Rowland was not herself of a sufficiently easy mind to see.

"Eddy," she said, "I have been told—I don't know how to say it to you." It had never till this moment occurred to her how difficult it would be to say, nor did she even know what she meant to imply, or how he could be connected with the matter. "I have been told," she repeated rather breathlessly, "that you, perhaps, might know something of—that in the dreadful position of affairs I might ask—you—"

"Ask me—what?" he said with a smile. The corners of his mouth trembled a little. He spilt the cream which he was pouring into his tea, but she did not observe these incidents, and indeed what could they have had to do with the question—but it was no question—which she asked? "Of course, if I can tell you anything, Mrs. Rowland, or throw any light—But tell me first. Ask me—what?"

She gazed at him a moment, and then poor Evelyn acknowledged her own impotence by a sudden burst of tears. "I have come down from Scotland," she said, "without my husband's knowledge. I have wandered to and fro—this is now the third day—trying to see you, Eddy. I am worn out, and my nerves have gone all wrong. I can't be sure of the step I am taking, if I am mistaken or not. The only thing I can do is to ask you simply—do you know anything about it? I don't know what. I have nothing clear in my head, only a sort of despair of making anything of it, ever. I was told that you might know something—that you might help me. If you can, for God's sake do it, Eddy! I will be grateful to you all my life."

He spilt a little of his tea as he carried it to his lips. After all, though nothing can be so hardened as youth, nothing is at the same time so soft. Eddy was not invulnerable, as some

people of his age, as Marion, for instance, appeared to be. He had never in his life been subjected to this sort of appeal. A young man who has a mother and other anxious friends is, perhaps, subjected to it over much, and at last comes to regard the appeal to his emotional nature—the argument against going wrong, that it will break some one else's heart—as a bore rather than a touching plea. But Eddy, who had never had any mother, and to whom no one had ever appealed thus, was moved—more than he could have imagined it possible that he should be moved. He put down his tea-cup with a trembling hand. He could not look in the face of the woman who had been so kind to him, and who looked at him with the utmost eloquence of which eyes were capable, eyes full of emotion and of tears, to back up her words. He did not know what reply to make to her. He had been already mightily shaken by the success of that great *coup* of his. When an error or crime is a failure, the conscience is quiet: we do not take upon ourselves the guilt of a thing by which we have gained nothing; but when, as in the present case, it succeeds perfectly, then the inexperienced spirit trembles. Eddy was only at this stage. He had received his proportion of the money, and he had still the remains of the hundred and fifty pounds which Archie had given him. Never had he known what it was to have so much in his pockets. He had been throwing it away in handfuls, as was natural, and as the excitement lessened, the compunction grew. It was not so much compunction, as it was a horrible sense of the insignificant value of a thing for which he had risked so much. He had, indeed, freed himself from the money-lender's hands, and was no longer in his power; yet never in his life would he be sure that he was not in somebody's power. And presently the money, the curse and the payment of his act, would be exhausted, and he no better, how much worse than before! These thoughts had been in Eddy's mind before this appeal was made to him. He had banished them, but they were ever waiting at his door, ready to catch him at an unguarded moment. And now here was this lady, this dear woman who had been kind to him! He could not swallow that tea, much as he wanted it or some restorative. He set it down again with a trembling hand. That had happened to Eddy, which some of the old Puritans meant when they described Satan as flinging so big a stone at the head of his victim, that it recoiled upon himself.

"Mrs. Rowland," he said, "we are speaking parables, and though we both know something, we don't understand what we each know. Will you tell me simply what has happened to Archie, and why? I guessed at it. I might not be right in my guess. Tell me as if I had never heard anything of it, and did not know."

Evelyn dried her eyes, and recovered her calm. She obeyed him literally without a word of preface. "On the night of the

ball a messenger arrived from the bank, bringing with him a cheque, purporting to be my husband's, for a thousand pounds. It was a forged cheque."

Eddy, in spite of himself, shivered as if with a sudden chill. He put his hands up to his eyes. It might have been merely a gesture of wonder and dismay.

"Mr. Rowland, I think wrongly, had been suspicious and uneasy about Archie before. He sent for him, and he was the more angry that Archie could not come till all the guests were gone. He held out the cheque to his son, and accused him of having done it."

Eddy withdrew his hands from his face and looked up. "Which he did not, which he never did, which he was not capable of," he cried quickly.

"Oh, Eddy, God bless you! I knew you would say so. And so did I—from the bottom of my heart."

"He was not," cried Eddy, with a sort of hysterical laugh, "clever enough—not half! he had not got it in him—nor bold enough—a fellow like that! He could not have done it if he had tried."

"Oh, Eddy! but that was not my husband's view. Archie was so astonished at first that he thought it something to laugh at. And then he was angry, furious, as passionate as his father. And then—he shook the dust from off his feet, as the Bible says, and left the house. And God knows if he will ever come back. Never, I think, till his innocence is proved. And his father—he is inexorable, he thinks, but he is very unhappy. Eddy!"

The tone of appeal in that last word was indescribable. She raised her voice a little and her eyes, and looked at him. And Eddy, unaccustomed, could not bear the look in those eyes.

"You speak of proving his innocence," he said; "was there any proof of his guilt?"

"Nothing: but that his handwriting is like his father's."

"And do you know," said Eddy, looking away, "have you found out to whom, for instance, it was paid?"

"My husband," said Evelyn, "is a very proud man. His honour is his life. He accepted the cheque, though he knew at once what it was. He would allow no questions. Therefore, it is impossible to inquire, to get any particulars. And the plan he devised to serve Archie will be his ruin. Imagine such a thing! We dare not ask lest he should be suspected; and so he must lie under suspicion all his life!"

"Oh, not so bad as that—fathers are not so bad as that: he will forgive him."

"But he will never ask to be forgiven—nor accept forgiveness; how should he, being innocent?" said Evelyn.

"I should not be so particular," said Eddy, with a momentary gleam of humour in his eyes. He could not be serious for long

together without some such relief. "And so Mr. Rowland has got the cheque," he said ; then, after a pause, "And may I ask, dear Mrs. Rowland, who was so kind as to suggest that you should ask me?"

"Marion for one : I can't tell why," Evelyn said.

("Oh," Eddy said within himself, with another twinkle in his eyes, "I owe you one for that, my little May.")

"And a very different person—a man whom perhaps you scarcely know, who suggested that your friend Johnson—"

"Oh, my friend Johnson ! the beast—to call that fellow my friend !" cried Eddy in a more audible parenthesis.

"Eddy," said Evelyn gravely, "in that respect you were very much to blame."

"Oh, in every respect I am much to blame !" cried the young man, springing from his chair. The vehemence of his motion was such that Evelyn had to put up her hand to save the table, against which he kicked in his rapid movement. He went across the room, and stood with his back to her, his shoulders up to his ears, his hands in his pockets, absorbed in his thoughts. And they were not pleasant thoughts : and they ranged over the widest space, the whole course of the future through which that cloud might ever be ready to fall : the horror of the consequences should they overtake him, the ruin of name and fame, the scandal and the catastrophe. It was not a thing which could be lived down, or which people could forget. All those arguments which are of so little use in the face of temptation, are of tremendous force when the deed is done, and nothing remains but the penalty to pay. His lively, quick intelligence, roused to rapid action, made its calculations with lightning speed : not unmoved by the thought of Archie in the strange jumble of selfish and unselfish motives—not untouched by the misery which had been produced on all sides.

He turned round again at the end of a few minutes, which seemed to Evelyn like so many years.

"Mr. Rowland has the cheque ?" he said. "Would he give it to you, and could you burn it ?"

"Eddy !"

"Do you think I am going out of my senses ? But I am not. If he will give you the cheque and let you burn it, I will—clear it all up," said Eddy with a gasp ; "and make Archie's innocence as clear as the day."

"Eddy ! Eddy !"

"Ah, you speak to me in a different tone now : your voice sounds like a blessing. But wait till you know, Mrs. Rowland ; perhaps it will change again. I will not take your kind hand till after. I am not going to cheat you out of your sympathy. Look here," he said, standing by her, "this is what you must do. Telegraph at once, 'If you will give me cheque to destroy, full information will be given from quite different quarter.' There," he said, "that's as concise as it can be made. I will come to

your hotel at five, when you will have your answer, and bring—all that you want."

"The proof," she said, "that it was not Archie?"

"The proof," he replied with a long-drawn breath, "who it was."

## CHAPTER XLII

EVELYN left the little sitting-room and went down-stairs with a quickly-beating heart. She did not quite see the meaning of what she was bidden to do. It was like the formula of a doctor's prescription, obscure yet authoritative, and to be obeyed without doubt or delay. Her heart was beating high, and her brain throbbing in sympathy. She had no thought but to get as quickly as possible to the nearest telegraph office; the only thing that restrained her was the thought that she was not quite sure where her husband was. It had been settled that he should return home that day, on which she had determined to return too so as to meet him. That part of her intention she evidently could not carry out, but in her absorption she did not reflect that, if he had arrived, it would be to the disappointment and surprise of finding her gone, without any explanation; that he would probably be annoyed and displeased, and not in a mood to receive her laconic and unexplained question graciously. This did not enter into Evelyn's mind at all. She was given up to one thought. That Rowland should be harsh to her or misunderstand her did not occur to her as possible.

She hurried down-stairs to fulfil her mission, bidding Eddy remain and take his breakfast. "You look as if you wanted it, my poor boy," she said, patting him on the shoulder.

"Oh, I want it—and something stronger!" he said, with a laugh.

"No, my dear; oh, no, my dear," she said anxiously. She even came back from the door, hurried and eager as she was, to deliver, like a true woman, a few very broken words on this subject. "Be content with the tea, dear Eddy," she said. A great tenderness for the boy had risen in her breast. He had never known his mother; how much there was to be excused in him! And he might have been her own son! though she thanked God that it was not so, and reflected with horror what her life would have been, had her youthful hopes been fulfilled, with such a man as Edward Saumarez had turned out to be, and with such a son: yet the very thought that she might have been the boy's mother always softened Evelyn. He was such a boy, too, still! though he had run the course of so many unknown ills—young enough to be taken into his mother's arms, if he had one, and coaxed and persuaded back to innocence. Eddy had no such feeling in the roused and excited state of his mind; he

would not laugh as she left him so as she could hear, but waited till, as he thought, she had left the house before he allowed that unsteady peal to burst forth. "Be content with the tea! Oh, the natural preacher, the all-advising woman!" but with the sound of that "dear Eddy!" in his ears the young man laughed till he cried—only because it was so good a joke, he said to himself: but in this there was a certain self-deception too.

Evelyn was hurrying out, waiting for no one to open the door for her, when she was suddenly stopped by Rogers, the servant who, she now recollects suddenly, was the personal attendant of Saumarez himself. She had not attempted to account for his presence, nor indeed thought of him in the hurry of her thoughts. But it now flashed upon her, with sudden surprise and vexation, in the enlightenment of his words—"My master, ma'am," he said, "would like to see you before you go."

"Your master!" It was with a gasp of alarm that Evelyn replied. "I did not know," she said, "that Mr. Saumarez was here."

"We came home—sudden," said the man, "yesterday. My master will often take a fancy like that. And he hopes, ma'am, that you will not go out of the house without giving him the pleasure of seeing you."

"I am in great haste," Mrs. Rowland said. "I came to Mr. Edward entirely on business. I am very sorry Mr. Saumarez was told that I was here: for indeed I have no time—"

"Mr. Saumarez bade me say, ma'am, that as you knew he was unable to come to you, he hoped as you would overlook the liberty and come to him." Rogers stood respectfully but firmly between Evelyn and the door. Not, of course, to prevent her going, which was an impossibility, but with a moral impulse that she felt incapable of resisting. "He has been in a deal of suffering, and it will cheer him up, ma'am," the man said.

With a pang of disappointment she yielded to the delay. It could only be for a few minutes, after all. She was exceedingly unwilling not only to be delayed, but to encounter Eddy's father under any circumstances, and above all in his own house. She followed the attendant with great suppressed impatience and reluctance. The sitting-room occupied by Saumarez was close to the door, with a window upon the street. It was the dining-room of the little London house, the back part, which was separated from the front by folding-doors, half-covered with curtains, being Saumarez's bedroom. He was seated in his invalid-chair between the fire and the window, and though the foggy morning had very little light in it, a blind of much the same colour as the fog, yellowish and grimy, was drawn down half over the window. Out of this obscurity, upon which the red light of the fire shed at one side an illumination which looked smoky in the atmosphere of the fog, the long thin countenance, peaked beard, and gleaming eyes of the invalid were visible with the most striking

Rembrandt effect. He held out to Evelyn a very thin, very white hand.

"Thanks, dear lady," he said, "for this gracious visit. I scarcely hoped for anything so good. In London, at this time of the year, a fair visitor of any kind is a rarity; but you!—I believed you to be dispensing hospitality in marble halls," he added, with a little laugh of the veiled satire which implied to Evelyn all that scorn of her late marriage, and parvenu husband, and vulgar wealth, which he did not put into words.

"You wonder, perhaps, what I have done with Rosamond," she said; "but she is perfectly well and perfectly safe. My own absence from home is one of three days only. I return to-night."

"Ah, Rosamond," he said; "poor child! To tell the truth I did not think of Rosamond. She is quite safe, I have no doubt. But you? What is my friend Rowland about that he allows his beautiful wife to come up to London, even in the dead season, on business, by herself?"

"The business," she said hurriedly, "was my own, and he could not have done it for me. I hope you are better, and that the waters—"

"The waters," he said, with a smile, "are good to amuse people with an idea that something is being done for them. That is the best of medical science nowadays. It does amuse one somehow, however vain one knows it to be, to think that something is being done. And so your business, my dear lady, concerned my son? Happy Eddy to be mixed up in the affairs of such a woman as you."

"There was a question I had to ask him," said Evelyn, faltering.

"Of so much importance that you have tried to find him vainly for two days. I say again, happy Eddy! I wish these were questions which his father could answer: but alas! all that is over with me."

"The question did not personally concern either him or me," said Evelyn, "but the well-being of a third person, for whom I am very closely concerned."

"Happy third person!" said the invalid, with a gleam of those wolfish, eager eyes out of the partial gloom. "I would I were one of those third persons. And Rowland, my good friend, does he know all about it, and of a necessity so strong that a lovely lady had almost forced her way into Eddy's room?"

"Mr. Saumarez," said Evelyn, feeling her cheeks burn, "my husband knows, or will know, exactly in every particular what I have done, and will approve it. You know what a boy of Eddy's age, and lately a visitor in my own house, the companion of my husband's son, must be to me."

"Age is very deceitful," said Saumarez with a laugh, "especially in Eddy's case, if you will permit me to say it. He is not a boy, as you will call him, to be judged by mere numerals. Eddy

is one of the sons occasionally to be met with in highly-civilized life, who are older than their fathers. Even a husband's son, dear lady, has been known to be not over-safe," he added, with again that mocking laugh.

"There is no question of safety," said Evelyn. She felt the blaze of shame to be so addressed, enveloping her from head to foot like a fire. "You must pardon me if I say that this is a kind of conversation very unpleasing to me," she said with spirit, "and most uncalled for." His laugh sounded like the laugh of a devil in her ears.

"Nay," he said, "you must not let my precious balms break your head. I speak as a friend, and in your best interests, Evelyn."

"My name is Mrs. Rowland, Mr. Saumarez."

"Oh! if I could ever forget the time when you were not Mrs. Rowland, but my Evelyn! But that, of course, is not to the purpose," he added with a sigh, at which he presently laughed. "We get sentimental. Dear lady, if you will let me say it, your age is precisely the one which is most dangerous, and in which a taste for youth has been often shown, in various conspicuous examples."

Evelyn rose to her feet with a start of offence and shame. She had not known it was in her to be so wildly, almost fiercely angry. "Not another word!" she said. "You abuse your privileges as a sick man. I will not hear another word."

"And what," he said in a low voice, stretching out his hand to detain her; "if I—or Rogers—were to let my good friend Rowland know that he had difficulty in preventing the trusted and honoured wife from making a forcible entrance into a young man's room?"

If Evelyn had been a weak or unreasoning woman, had she been without trust in her husband or herself, had she been apt to concealment, or to believe, as so many do, that an evil motive is always the most readily believed in, it is possible that she might at this odious moment—a moment she could never bear to think of after—have been lost one way or other, bound as a miserable thrall under this man's power, whose malignant mouth could have done her such vile and frightful injury. But fortunately she was none of these things. It had not even once occurred to her that her determination to see Eddy, wherever she might find him, would have been made the subject of any remark. And if she now perceived that it was a foolish and imprudent thing, the discovery was made in a moment of such extreme excitement that it had no effect upon her. She stood by him for a second, towering over him in a wrath which possessed and inspired her. "Do so," she said, "at once: or rather let Rogers do so, Mr. Saumarez. It will not be so degrading to him, a man without instruction, possibly knowing no better, as it would be to you. And besides, he could speak from personal knowledge. His letter will find my husband at Rosmore. Good-bye."

"And do you think you are to silence the world in this way?" said Saumarez. "Myself, or Rogers perhaps, and your husband if he is such a fool—but—"

"Good-bye," she said once more.

"Evelyn!" he cried.

"Good-bye." Mrs. Rowland went out of the house like an arrow from a bow, drawing the door behind her, with a sound that rang through the sleepy street. She came so quickly that she almost discovered a watcher on the other side, intent upon all her movements; that is, she gave him the shock of a possible discovery: for, as for Evelyn, she saw nothing. Her eyes were dim and misty with the heat of indignation that seemed to rise up from her flushed cheeks and panting breath to blind her. She walked away with the impulse of that wrath, at a pace that would have been impossible under other circumstances, walking far and fast, incapable of thinking even where it was that she wanted to go.

The pure air, however, and the rapid movement, soon brought Mrs. Rowland to herself, and she turned back upon her rapid course so suddenly that again— But she did not observe any one, or anything in the road, which, even in this dead season, was sufficiently full to confuse an unaccustomed visitor. She went at once to the telegraph office and sent off the message, as a matter of precaution, sending it to Rosmore, and in duplicate to the house of Sir John Marchbanks, where it was possible Rowland might still be. She added a word of explanation to the message dictated by Eddy. "Don't be surprised to hear from me, from London," she wrote, without any recollection of the concise style necessary to a telegram; "all explanations when we meet, and I know you will approve." When she had sent this off, Evelyn was solaced and more or less restored to herself. She walked back more calmly to the hotel, beginning to feel a little the effect of the morning's exertions and excitement. But when she reached the shelter of her room, and felt herself alone, and under no restraint from other people's looks, she was incapable of keeping up any longer. A long fit of crying gave vent to the pent-up trouble in her breast. She bent down her head upon her hands and wept like a child, helplessly. When one has been outraged, insulted, hurt in every fibre, and with no power to vindicate or avenge, which are momentary modes of relief—the mingled pain and shame and rage, quite justifiable, yet making up a passion which hurts almost as much as the cause which produced it, lay all one's defences low. Men even are wrought to tears by such means, how much more a woman, to whom that expression of suffering is always so painfully and inconveniently near.

When Evelyn had overcome this weakness and recovered her confusion, I cannot assert that her mind was easy or her thoughts comfortable. Was she so sure that her husband would approve? Had she not been imprudent and unguarded in what she had

done? The thought had not entered her mind before, but the light of a vile suggestion is one that makes the whitest innocence pause and shudder. Could any one else for a moment think——? She said to herself, No, no! with a high head and expanded nostril. But it made her unhappy in spite of herself. It was as if something filthy and festering had been thrown into her mind. She could not forget it, could not throw it forth again, felt its unutterable foulness like a burn or a wound. Rogers, perhaps the servants, might have thought—for servants have dreadful ways of thinking, dreadful back-stair ways, the ideas of minds which peep and watch, and hope to detect. He might have thought—and in that mysterious way in which such whispers fly, it might be communicated to some other privileged attendant, and so go forth upon the air, an evil breath. Was it possible? was it possible? Evelyn seemed to feel already the confusion, the bewilderment, the restless horror of a whispered scandal, an accusation that never could be met, because never openly made, one of those vile breathings which go through society. It is so strange to think that one may one's self be subject to such an insinuated wrong. Herself! the last person, the most unlikely, the most impossible! It was already a wrong to her that the vile idea should be put within the furthest range of things thought of. And thus Mrs. Rowland spent a very restless and miserable afternoon. She could neither eat nor rest. She put up her "things," the few necessaries she had brought with her, to be ready for the night train, and tried to still herself, to keep quiet, to read, but without effect. There is nothing so difficult to get through as a day spent in waiting, and it was scarcely past twelve o'clock when, after all she had gone through, she returned to the solitary empty hotel room, with its big stone balustrade against the window, and the crowd sweeping along below. She went out upon the balcony and watched for the coming of the telegraph boy with an answer to her message. There were dozens of telegraph boys coming and going, and at intervals she could see one below, mounting the very steps of the hotel. But hour after hour passed, and nothing came for her. On two or three occasions she ran to the door of her room, as if that could quicken the steps of the tardy messenger; but among the many people who passed up and down the stairs and looked at her curiously, there was no one bringing the reply upon which all the success of this painful mission hung.

And then it was five o'clock: but not soon, not till months of weary waiting seemed to have passed; and then ensued, to Evelyn perhaps the worst of all, a half-hour of excitement and expectation almost beyond bearing. Would Eddy come? Would he stand by his bargain, though she was not able to do so with hers? It was nothing that he did not appear at the hour. He had never been punctual. He was one of those who do not know the value of time, nor what it is to others to keep to an

hour. Nothing would ever convince Eddy that the rest of the world were not as easy in respect to time, as little bound by occupation as himself. He had no understanding of those who do a certain thing at a certain time every day of their lives. The waiter appeared bringing lights, uncalled for, for Evelyn, sitting in the partial dark, looking out upon the lamps outside, felt her heart beating too quick and fast to give her leisure to think of what was required or the hour demanded. He brought lights, he brought tea ; he made an attempt, which she prevented, to draw the curtains, and shut out the gleaming world outside, the lights and sounds which still seemed to link her with the distance, and made it possible that some intelligence might still come, some answer to her prayer. And then suddenly, all at once, in the hush after the waiter had gone from the room, Eddy opened the door. Mrs. Rowland sprang from her seat as if she had not expected him at all, and his coming was the greatest surprise in the world.

"Eddy ! you !"

"Did you not expect me ?" he said, astonished.

She drew a chair near her, and made him sit down. "I feel as if I had brought you here on false pretences. I have got no answer to the telegram."

Eddy had taken a small pocket-book out of his breast pocket, and held it in his hand. He stopped suddenly, and looked at it, then at Mrs. Rowland. He was excited and pale, but yet his usual humorous look broke over his face. "No answer ?" he said.

"Did I tell you my husband was from home ? he ought to have returned to-day ; but perhaps he has not done so. I ought also to have returned to-day. It means nothing but that he has not got home."

"There is no answer," Eddy said, as if explaining matters to himself, "and I will be giving myself away and no security acquired. Well, in for a penny, in for a pound," he said. "I have got it all here, Mrs. Rowland ; but you ought to give me your word that I shall not be the worse for it."

She sat gazing at him with such comprehension, that he laughed aloud.

"She doesn't understand me," he said, "not a bit : it is not in her to understand ; she has not an idea how serious it is."

Eddy's hands were unsteady, his little gray eyes were sparkling with a feverish fire. From his foot, which he kept shaking in nervous commotion, as he sat on the table with one leg suspended, to the mobile eyebrows, which quivered and twisted over his forehead, there was nothing still about him. He took a piece of paper on which something was written out of his pocket-book, and looked at it, holding it in his hand.

"Here it is," he said, and his voice shook a little, though its tone was light enough. "The guilty witness. When you put this into your husband's hands, Mrs. Rowland, he will know

who forged his name. Have you a safe place to put it in, a purse or something? For, remember, I am placing my life in your hands."

"Eddy, Eddy, you frighten me! I can't imagine what you mean."

"No, I know you can't; perhaps not even when you see it will you know. But give him that, Mrs. Rowland, and he will understand."

He held the paper a moment more, and then gave it to her. There was not a particle of colour in his sallow, small face. He sat on the corner of the table, swinging one leg, at first not looking at her, a smile on his face, which grew every moment more gray.

Evelyn took the paper almost with alarm. She gazed at it with a look at first of intense surprise and disappointment. What did it mean? her husband's signature written two or three times on a piece of paper, as if he had been trying a pen. "James—James," twice or thrice repeated; then "Rowland." Then in full, "James Rowland," with a characteristic flourish at the end. She looked at the paper and then at Eddy, and then—

It was his look that forced conviction on her mind, not the guilty witness in her hand. She gave a great cry, "Eddy!" and put her hand over her eyes, as if to shut out some unwelcome sight.

"Yes," he said, swinging his foot, his head sunk upon his breast; "that is just about what it is: and I am a—a—everything that is bad. But not such a cad as to let another man be ruined instead of me," he cried.

Evelyn got up to her feet, stumbling, not seeing where she went, her eyes blinded with tears. "Oh, my poor boy, my poor boy!" she cried, putting her arms round him, drawing him to her.

"Is that how you take it?" he said with a sob. "I did not expect you to take it like that."

"Oh, Eddy!" she said, not able to find other words; "oh, my poor boy!"

He drew himself away from her a little, dashing off the tears that were in his eyes. "You know what that means, Mrs. Rowland," he said, "though you may be sorry for me, and he may forgive me for your sake; but it is separation for ever. I mustn't presume to let you be kind to me." He took her back to her chair and placed her in it, and kissed her hand. And then he took up his hat. "It could mean nothing else, and I should be too thankful that he takes no step. Of course, I shall never see any of you again." Then he suddenly laughed out, the colour coming back to his face. "And I was fond of that little Marion," he said; "I was, though you might not think it, and she did not deserve it any more than I do. I was—but all that's at an end now."

## CHAPTER XLIII

THESE movements of Evelyn's were watched, although she did not know it, and in the strangest way. Rowland left home leaving no address, nor any other indication of what he meant to do, the evening after his return to Rosmore. He came back on the Wednesday, and on Friday morning he arrived in London, and followed his wife's steps to the hotel, where he felt sure she would go. When he arrived he was told that Mrs. Rowland was indeed there, but had just gone out. "She cannot be out of sight yet," the porter said, pointing the direction she had taken, and Rowland, without a word, followed his wife. He had no intention when he did so, no plan but to overtake her, to join her, to ask for an explanation of her conduct: but he had scarcely caught sight of the well-known figure walking before him along the thronged pavement before another idea struck him. He would not make himself known, he would watch what she was doing, and leave his eventual conduct to the guidance of the moment. One great motive which induced him to come to this resolution was that the moment he caught sight of her, James Rowland, who had left home breathing flame and fire, shrank into himself, and felt that he no more dared approach his wife with an air of suspicion and demand an explanation of her conduct than he dared invade the retirement of the Queen. The one thing was about as possible as the other. All his old reverence for his lady-wife, all his conviction of her absolute superiority to everybody he had ever known, came back upon him like a flood. Who was he to demand an explanation from her? Was it likely that he could know better what was seemly and becoming than she did? Was it possible that she, the crowning glory of his life, could do anything against his honour, could commit or compromise him in any way? A hush fell upon his troubled tempestuous mind the moment he perceived her before him, walking along with quiet dignity, unpretending, yet not, he said to himself in his pride, to be overlooked anywhere, moving among the common crowd as if she were in a presence-chamber. He held his breath with a sort of horror at the thought that he might have been capable of going up to her, in his passion, asking her what she did there, whom she wanted, commanding her to return home at once. The sight of the sweep of her dark skirt, the carriage of her head, arrested him, temper and irritation and all, in a moment. He fell back a step or two, with a vague inclination to turn tail altogether, turn back homewards and humbly await her coming, which should be in her own time. But his heart was so sore that he could not do that. He followed her mechanically till she turned off the great thoroughfare to the smaller street, where he still followed, taking some precaution to keep himself out of her sight. He

might have saved himself the trouble, for Evelyn saw nothing save the great object she had in view—the interview which was before her.

He watched her into Saumarez's house, divining whose house it was, with a pang at his heart. There was a convenient doorway opposite in which he could stand and wait for her return ; and there he placed himself, with the most curious shame of himself and his unwonted unnatural position. Watching his wife ! which was only less intolerable than accusing her, disclosing to her that he was capable of suspecting her spotless meaning, whatever it might be. No one who has not tried that undignified *métier* can have any idea how the watcher can divine what is going on inside a house from the minute signs which show outside. He saw a certain commotion in the upper story, a vague vision of her figure at the window, the blinds quickly drawn up in the next room, enough to make him, all his senses quickened with anxiety and eagerness, divine, more or less, what was taking place. He saw a man come to the window, looking moodily out as if in thought, turning round to speak to some one behind. Whoever it was, it was not the crippled Saumarez, who, it had been so intolerable to him to think, was to be consulted on his affairs. Then he seemed to perceive by other movements below that the visitor was received in the lower room; and then she came hurriedly out, taking him by surprise, with no decorous attendance to the door, rushing forth almost as if escaping. He had to hurry after to keep up with her hasty excited steps. And then he followed her to the telegraph office, and then back to the hotel. He had got without difficulty a room close by, being anxious above measure not to betray to any one that he was not with her, that there was any separation between them—only not quite so anxious for that as that she should not see him, or divine that he had followed her. He sat with his door ajar all the afternoon, in the greatest excitement, watching her, making sure that she expected some one, listening to her inquiries at the servants if no telegram had come. She expected, then, a reply ; was it from himself at home ? Finally, Rowland saw Eddy, to his infinite surprise, arrive in the evening, and heard from where he watched the sound of a conversation, not without audible risings and fallings of tone, which marked some gamut of emotion in it. Eddy ! what could his wife have to do with Eddy ? Was it on that boy's business, in answer to any appeal from him, that she had come ? Was it perhaps to ask help for Eddy that she had sent that useless telegram ? James Rowland had been deeply offended by the idea that his wife had come to consult another man upon his affairs ; but it stung him again into even hotter momentary passion now, when the conviction came upon him that it was not his affairs, but something altogether unconnected with him, that had brought her so suddenly to London away from her home. The first would have been an error of judgment almost

unpardonable. The second was—it was a thing that could not bear thinking of. His wife, consecrated to the sharing of all his sorrows, and who had shown every appearance of taking them up as her own, to leave her home and her husband in his trouble, and come here all this way in so strange and clandestine a manner at the call of Eddy—Eddy ! He had himself been very favourable to Eddy, better than the boy deserved, who, however, had been generous about Archie, seeking an opportunity of making his obligations known : but that she, who had pretended to such interest in Archie, should suddenly be found to be thinking not of him but of another boy !

Rowland had scarcely gone through such a time of self-contention in all his life as during the hour or two that elapsed between Eddy's departure and the time of the train. Eddy went away with a sort of *faux air* of satisfaction, which imposed upon the unaccustomed, inexperienced detective. He at least seemed to be satisfied, whoever was distressed. He had his hat over his brows, but he swung his stick lightly in his hand, and began to hum an opera air as he went down the stairs. She must have liberated him from some scrape, settled his affairs for him somehow—the young reprobate, who was always in trouble ! Rowland would not have refused to help the boy himself : he would have treated Eddy very gently had he appealed to him ; but that his wife should put herself so much out of the way for Eddy, was intolerable to him. He sat there within his half-open door, angry, miserable, and heard her give her orders about her departure. She was going by the night train, and wanted some tea, and her bill and her cab got for her in time. "It is only six now," he heard her say with a sigh, as the waiter stood at the open door. She was longing to get home, was she ? glad to be done with it, though she had come all this way to do it, whatever it was. He went down-stairs then and got some dinner for himself, and arranged his own departure at the same hour. It was the strangest journey. She in one carriage, altogether unconscious of his vicinity, he in another, so deeply conscious of hers. He sprang out of his compartment at every station, to steal past the window of the other, to catch a passing glimpse of her. There was another lady in the corner nearest the door, but in the depths of the carriage he could see her profile, pale against the dark cushions, her eyes sometimes shut, and weariness and lassitude in every line of her figure and attitude as she lay back in her corner. He did not think she was asleep. She would be thinking over what she had done for Eddy ; thinking not of her husband and his trouble, but of that other—the other man's boy. And bitter and sore were Rowland's thoughts. The fury with which he had started was not so heavy as this ; for then he had thought that she was fully occupied with his troubles, though so unwise, so little judicious as to confide them to the last man in the world whose sympathy he could have desired. But now to think that it was not his

trouble at all that had occupied his wife, nothing about him, though, heaven knew, he had enough to bear—but the well-deserved discomfort of another, the needs of the trifling boy, ill-behaved and untrustworthy, for whom his own father had little to say. Less and less did James Rowland feel himself able to make himself known to his wife, to upbraid or reproach her. Why should he? he had no reason. She was spotless, if ever woman was. She had not even offended against him in the way he had feared. She had left home only to do a good action; to be kind. He was well aware of this; and to assail her, to take her to task, to accuse her even of carelessness towards him, was more than he could permit himself to do: it was impossible. But still it seemed to Rowland, as he travelled home, with unspeakable, suppressed anger and pain, that this was the most unsupportable of all, and that Eddy's shuffling, inconsiderable figure would stand between them now for ever and ever. Not that he was jealous of Eddy: it was disappointment, disenchantment, the failure of his trust in her. To leave the boy, in whom she had professed so much interest, and whose well-being, greatly as he had sinned, involved his father's, without lifting a hand to help him, though she led her husband to believe that she would do something, work a miracle, bring him back; and go off to the end of the earth, secretly, without telling anybody, to the succour of Eddy! It was intolerable, though there might not be a word to say.

Then came the arrival, jaded and chilled, at Glasgow, in the cold gray of the morning, scarcely light. He kept about and watched what she would do, nothing doubting that her next step would be to the other railway which would take her to the banks of the loch, in time for the early boat to Rosmore. But Evelyn did not carry out this part of the programme, to his great surprise. She lingered at the station, performing such a toilet as was possible; waiting, it appeared, until the morning was a little more advanced. It was more and more difficult to keep out of her sight, yet keep her in sight in this familiar place where everybody knew him. He pulled up his greatcoat to his ears, his travelling-cap down upon his forehead. He could not even copy her and add to his comfort by a wash, lest in that moment she should disappear. He could not even get a cup of coffee, and his outer man stood more in need of restoratives and support than hers, and could ill bear the want of them. But at length the morning became sufficiently advanced, as it seemed, for her purpose, and she got into a cab with her small bag, which was all her baggage. He could not tell what orders she gave to the driver, but he ordered the man, into whose cab he jumped without more delay than he could help, to follow that in which Evelyn was. At this moment all the excitement of those bewildering twenty-four hours culminated. He felt as though he could scarcely breathe: he could not bear his travelling-cap on his head, though it was light enough, or his coat across his

chest, though it was a cold morning to ordinary persons, people who felt cold and heat, and had no fiery furnace within them. He kept his uncovered head out of the window of his cab, watching the slow progress of the one before him. How slow it was, creeping along the dark streets as if she had told the man to go slowly to postpone some crisis, some climax of excitement to which she was bound! Rowland's heart thumped like a steam-engine against his labouring breast. Where was she going? Who could there be in Glasgow to whom it was of the slightest consequence what happened to Eddy Saumarez, who would even know of his existence? She must be deep in the boy's secrets indeed, he said to himself, with scornful wrath, to know in all this strange town who could have anything to do with him. He seemed to recognize the turns she was taking with a bewildered perception of the unsuspected, of something that might be coming quite different to anything he had thought. Where was she going? The dingy streets are like each other everywhere, few features of difference to distinguish them, and yet he seemed to be going over ground he knew. That shop at the corner he had surely seen before—of course he must have seen it before! Where could a stranger go in Glasgow that he had not been before, he who was to the manner born, who had spent his childhood in Glasgow, and gone to his daily work by these very ways? Yes, of course, he knew it all very well, every turn, not only from the old times of his youth, but—Where was she going? His heart beat louder than ever, the veins on his temples set up independent pulses, something fluttered in his bosom like a bird, making him sick with wonder and expectancy. Where was she going? What, what could she mean? What did she want here?

The Sauchiehall Road—full of the grayness of the November morning: children playing on the pavement, women going about with their baskets to get their provisions, a lumbering costermonger's cart trundling along noisily over the stones, with a man crying “caller codfish prime; caller haddies!” all incised into this man's beating brain as if done with a knife. He stopped his cab hurriedly, jumped out, dismissed it, and walked slowly along, with his eyes upon the other lumbering vehicle in front. The buzzing in his brain was so wild that everything was confused, both sound and sights, and he stumbled over the children on the pavement as he went along, not seeing where he went. At last it stopped, and his heart stopped too with one sudden great thump like a sledge-hammer. A flash of sudden light seemed to come from something, he knew not what, whether in his eyes or outside of them, showing like a gleam from a lantern the well-known house, the big elderberry bush, with its dusty, black clusters of fruit. And she came out of her cab and went quickly up to the door.

Rowland stood quite still in the midst of the passengers on the pavement, the children knocking against him as they hopped

about on one foot, propelling the round piece of marble, with which they were playing, from one chalked compartment to another. It hit him on the shin, but did not startle him from his amazement, from his pause of wonder, and the blank of incapacity to understand. What was she doing here of all places in the world? What did she want there? What had that house to do with Eddy Saumarez? Eddy Saumarez—Eddy! It got into a sort of rhyme in his brain. What had that house to do with it? What did she want there? What—what was the meaning of it all?

## CHAPTER XLIV

WHEN Archie left his father's house on the morning after the ball, unrefreshed by sleep, half mad with excitement, bewildered by that last interview with Mrs. Rowland, and the sensation of something supernatural which had come over him, in the half-lighted hall, with the chill of the desolate new day coming in, he was perhaps in as wretched plight as ever a boy of twenty ever found himself in: and that is saying much, for, but for the inalienable power of recovery in youth, how sharp would be the pang of many a scene, in which the boy, guilty or not guilty, has started up against parental wrath or reproof, and shaken the dust from off his feet and gone forth, perhaps to dismay and ruin, perhaps to new life and work. The sensation of turning the back upon home, in such circumstances, is not very rare in human consciousness, and must have left in many memories a poignant recollection, terrible, yet perhaps not altogether painful to realize, in the long series of good or evil fortune which has followed it. Archie, for the first hour or two, as he sped up the side of the loch, like an arrow from a bow, walking five miles an hour in his excitement, scarcely feeling the fatigue of his condition, or any physical circumstances whatever, did not even know where he was going, or what he would do. The home of his childhood, the kind nurse and ruler of his docile youth, were not far off, it is true, and in that he was better off than most of the young prodigals among whom this guiltless boy found himself suddenly classed. But his aunt had been prepossessed against him, she had all but forbidden him to return the last time he left her door, and his heart was sore with injured pride and innocence, misconstrued in that quarter as well as every other. He had gone wildly out in the early gray of the morning, and pursued the straight road before him rather because it was the straight road than from any other circumstance, unable to form any decision, or for a long time even to think of any conclusion to this forlorn walk out into the world. It was, of course, hours too early for the early boat, and had it not been so, Archie would not have exposed himself to question

or remark as to his departure, from the people who knew him. The cottagers on the roadside who had noted with some surprise, on the previous night, the carriage from Maryport, far on the other side of the loch, which had driven rapidly by, coming and going, carrying the messenger from the bank, might have found themselves—had they divined who the pedestrian was who passed by their doors in the early morning, treading the same long way—spectators of one of those human dramas which take place in our midst every day, though we are seldom the wiser. At the smithy at Lochhead, one man did indeed ask the other, “Was that no young Rowland from Rosmore?” as Archie went by. But the powerful reply of the other, “Man, it’s impossible!” quenched that one suspicion. He had tied his old comforter, of Aunt Jean’s knitting, round his throat, as much for a disguise as for the warmth. He had put on his old clothes, with which he had first come to Rosmore, garments of which he only now knew the unloveliness—and was as unlike in appearance as in feeling to the millionaire’s only son, the young master of everything in his father’s luxurious house. Archie had never indeed felt his elevation very real: he scarcely ventured to accept and act upon it as if he were himself a person of importance; he, to his own consciousness, always Archie Rowland of the Westpark Football Club, and the Philosophers’ Debating Society, and of Sauchiehall Road. It was true that already Sauchiehall Road had sustained the shock of disenchantment, and he had a shamed and subdued feeling of having somehow gone beyond the circle to which he had once been so pleased to belong, and being no longer at home in it. But still less was he really at home on the moors with his unaccustomed gun, or in the drawing-room with all its unfamiliar necessities. He was now more a nobody than ever, belonging neither to one life nor the other, cast out of both; and he walked along dreamily as the morning broadened into the day, and all the world awoke, and the family fires were lighted, and the family tables spread. He walked on, and on getting beyond the range in which young Mr. Rowland of Rosmore was known, faint, tired, without food or rest, an outcast who belonged to nobody, till his progress began to be almost mechanical, his limbs moving like those of an automaton, all volition gone, nothing possible but to put one foot beyond the other in sheer monotony of movement, like the wheels of a machine. He did not pause, because he felt that if the machine were stopped, being human, it might not be able to go on again. Wheels that are made of wood and iron have this great advantage over flesh and blood.

At last he got to the railway, and stumbled into a carriage, and felt the comparative well-being of rest, when he was able to begin to think a little what he ought to do. And then it came back to Archie that he had bound himself to a certain course of action. He had flung the intimation at his father in the height of their passionate encounter, that there should be no difficulty

in finding him, that he would go to the old home and wait there to be arrested, to stand his trial. It brought the most curious quickening of feeling to remember that he had said that. To be arrested, to be brought to trial!—he seemed to see the scene, himself standing at the bar, his father giving evidence in the box, the forged cheque handed round, and all the wise heads bent over it, all finding signs to prove that he had done it—he that scorned it, that cared nothing for money, that would have flung it all into the sea rather than take a pin unjustly from any man. The fire blazed up in his dim eyes, so dim with want of rest and excess of emotion. He accused of such a crime! He laughed within himself at the futility of it, the foolishness! Had it been anything else of which they had accused him—of murdering somebody, for instance. Archie knew that he had a high temper (he who had always been so docile and so gentle), and he thought it possible that, if much irritated and provoked, he might have lifted his hand and given a sudden blow. There would have been in that a possibility, a chance, that he might have done it: but to forge a man's name, for the sake of money—money! The scorn with which he said the word over to himself in the noise of the railway, nobody hearing, was tremendous. He laughed aloud at the thought. But it decided him on one point, that there must be no question as to where he went. It must be to his aunt's house; the policeman could come to arrest him there, and therefore there he must go. It was true that it might be bringing shame upon her, innocent; but at all events he must go there first, tell her the whole, and if she desired that he should find another address, at least acquaint her with it, that she might give it to the policemen when they came. This did him good, as it settled the question, and brought him out of all uncertainty. It fortified him even against Aunt Jean's possibly grim reception of him. He would go there, not for anything he wanted from her, but to answer the claim of honour, which was the first necessity of all.

Mrs. Brown saw him from her window when he came, sick and weary, up the little path under the shadow of the elderberry tree, and ran and opened the door to him with a cry of, "Archie! eh, my man, but you're welcome to me," which thawed his heart a little. He threw himself down wearily in the familiar parlour, on one of the chairs, where he was always forbidden to sit lest he should discompose the antimacassar extended on its back. He remembered this as he sat down with a dreary laugh.

"This is one of the chairs I was never to sit upon," he said.

"Oh, my bonnie man," cried Mrs. Brown, "sit where ye please; dight your feet upon the sofa, if you please; do anything you like! but eh, whatever you do, dinna leave me to one side and cast me off as if I did not belong to you: for that is what I canna bear."

"I will not do that," said Archie; "far from that: for I am

'come to ask you to take me back, aunty, as if I had never been away."

Mrs Brown gave a shriek of dismay. "Oh, dinna say that, dinna say that! for it looks as if things were going ill at the house at home."

"Things are going as ill as they can : at their very worst," he said. "I've come home, Aunt Jean, because it's a well-known place, where I've lived all my life, so that if the policemen should be sent after me—"

She interrupted him with another shriek. "The pollisman!" she cried.

"That is what it has come to," he answered, "in four months' time, no more. I was to be a gentleman, never to want, Mr. Rowland's son, the great man that everybody knows : and now I'm cast out, charged with a crime, with the thing flung in my face as if it were beyond doubt ; and I'm to be brought up before the judges, and tried—and hanged, for anything I know. I promised," said Archie, throwing back his tired head, "that I would wait upon him here, that I would not stir a step but bide—the worst that he or any man could do. But, Aunty Jean, to shame you, an honest, upright woman, with policemen coming to your door, is what I will not do. So, what I want is, that you should find a lodging for me, any kind of place, a little hole, what does it matter."

"To hide you ; oh, to hide you, Archie ?" cried Mrs. Brown, wringing her hands.

"To hide me!" he cried, with scorn ; "it would be easy enough to do that."

"Oh, my laddie," cried Aunty Jean, "do you think I would let anybody but me do that? They shall never come at you, but o'er my body ; they shall never touch a hair of your head, if it was to cost me my last drop of blood. Oh, Archie ! it's me that will hide you, my bonnie man. There's little means in this house, but I'll find a way. If it comes to heart's love and a woman's wit against your muckle pollisman—"

"Aunty!" cried Archie, rising to his feet.

"Oh, whisht, whisht, my bairn ! Come up the stair an' we'll settle it a'. Ye'll have the air of going away when the evening comes : and you'll just creep back, and I'll make ye a hidin' hole, where a' the pollismen in Glesgow shall not find ye. Whisht, we'll have to take Bell into our counsel ; but she's just an excellent lass, baith true and sure."

"Aunty!" cried the young man, the tears bursting from his eyes, "do you think I'm guilty, then : you ! you think I did it—you ! Oh, Lord ! who will believe me, then ?" he cried, stretching out despairing hands.

"Me?" cried Mrs. Brown ; "me think ye did it, or any ill thing ! I would as soon, oh, far sooner, believe it of mysel' !"

He burst into a low fit of hysterical laughter. "Then why should ye hide me ?" he said.

The good woman was taken aback for a moment. "What were ye meaning, then, Archie, about the pollisman? and you to bide till he came? Ye shall bide as lang as you please, my bonnie boy; and everything we can do to make you comfortable, Bell and me. Bless me! I'm speaking to my ain lad as if he was a strange gentleman, and didna ken. What ails ye, Archie? you are just as white as a sheet, and laughing and greeting like a lassie."

"I have had no breakfast," he said, "and I've walked——"

But here he was interrupted by another shout from Mrs. Brown, who rushed away to the kitchen, appearing again in a moment or two with a tray, upon which was piled everything she could think of, from cold beef to strawberry jam. He was not hungry: any such feeling had abandoned him some time ago, but he was faint from want of food. And it was only when he had eaten and rested, in the quiet of the afternoon, that he was able to tell his tale coherently, and that she was sufficiently composed to hear.

The exclamations with which that tale was accompanied and interrupted, her dismay, her wrath—her triumph in Archie's defiance of his father and resolution to shake the dust of Rosmore from off his feet, were endless; but when he came to his interview with Mrs. Rowland, Jean began to shake her head.

"It would be her wyte all through," she said. "Eh, I would not have you lippen to her! It is just her that has been at the bottom of it a' through."

Archie's momentary softness towards his stepmother was gone. He had begun to remember his griefs, real or imaginary, against her, and to persuade himself that her pity had been fictitious and theatrical. But he made a protest against this view.

"She could not have forged the cheque, in order to get me into trouble," he said.

"Oh, how do we ken what the like of her would do?" said Mrs. Brown; "a woman that makes a marriage like yon, is just set upon everything she can get out of the man. If he were to die, what would become of her? Oh, he would aye leave her something, enough to keep her; but there would be an awfu' difference between that and Rosmore, and a' her grand company and her horses and carriages. They," said Aunty Jean, cleverly changing her ground, so that it was not Mrs. Rowland alone whom she could be supposed to refer to, "will just do anything to get a little more siller to lay up for that time. And if they can persuade the poor man that his bairns, that are his natural kin, are no what he thinks them—eh, Archie, the objeck's just ower evident."

"She was very kind to me," he said. "She said she believed me."

"Oh ay; it's very easy to be kind when the harm's done. After she had got your father set against ye, and your life in

her power, then was her time to speak ye fair, my poor laddie, and make him think her the kindest in the world. I've seen all that afore now," said Mrs. Brown. "It's no half so uncommon as ye think. Just the invention of the devil to make their father think ill o' them, and then a purrin' and a phrasin' to pretend that she's on their side: that's just what I've seen a score o' times before."

Archie was only half convinced, but he allowed himself to be silenced at least. "Somebody must have done it," he said. "I have thought of it a great deal since—somebody that knew my father's writing, and could get a cheque, and had the opportunity of getting the money, without suspicion."

Mrs. Brown nodded her head at each detail, and said, "Just that, just that."

"You are making a mistake," he said. "She writes a little pretty hand, like a lady. She could not do it, even if she were capable of a thing which is a crime."

"I tell you," said Jean, "they are just capable of everything, to get them that's in their way out o' their way. And what about the writing? If they canna do a thing themselves, there's aye others they can get to do it. An ill person never missed an ill deed yet for want of a tool."

"You speak nonsense!" he cried angrily; but he could not argue with a woman strong in the panoply of ignorance and obstinacy. And by the oft repetition of such arguments, Archie came, if not to believe, at least to acquiesce, in that decision that Mrs. Rowland, somehow, was at the bottom of it all; that it was contrary to her interests that a good understanding should exist between Archie and his father, and that, whoever had actually done this thing, the conception and execution of it were in her hands. Sometimes he had a compunction, remembering her look, her tears, her blessing. Was she such a hypocrite that she could bid God bless him and not mean it—mean, indeed, the very reverse? And then that thrill which he could never forget, that touch which came from no visible hand. What was it? some witchcraft of hers, or a sign from heaven, as he had thought it for a moment? He said nothing to Mrs. Brown of this, and he tried himself not to think of it. The recollection brought with it a pang of terror: he did not like to think of it at night when he was alone. If it should come again, if he should see, perhaps, his mother looking at him through the darkness—his mother, so long dead, whom he did not remember! He had not courage to desire such a visitor, and he tried to put this strange and wonderful sensation out of his mind.

But Archie did not spend happy days in his old home. He found it so changed, so unlike what it had once been: or was it only he who was changed? He had no heart to return to the old football team, to renew his acquaintance with the students, who were now returning daily to resume their work at the

College. He would not go to the room where the Philosophers met. Had he become so low, so mean, he asked himself sometimes, that for a little want of refinement, a difference of clothes, he should shrink from his old friends? A want of refinement—as if he had any refinement, or ever would have; he, to whom Miss Saumarez had spoken so plainly, whom she had bidden not to be—such an ill-bred, low-bred fellow! That was what she had meant, though the words she used had been different. He never saw any one like Rosamond Saumarez now. There were many nice good girls in the Sauchiehall Road, girls who looked up to him, no one who would take him to task and show him how inferior he was: there was none like her, none. And he never would meet any one like her again. He never would see her as he remembered her so well, sitting at the piano in the dim background of the great room, scarcely visible, playing music which he did not understand, which overawed him, and irritated and worried him, but never lost its spell—not that it had any spell, except in the hands that called it forth. And then suddenly the picture would change, and he would see her walk out of the gloom in her white dress, tall and slim, coming up to him, the fool, in his inaction, laying a hand upon his arm, like the dropping of a rose leaf, carrying him off always in her composed, proud way, with her head high, after Eddy and Marion. These two were full of fun; they enjoyed it, as boys and girls enjoy dancing all the world over. But Archie did not enjoy it. It was far more than fun to him, it was as if some one lifted a curtain to him to reveal a new world. He never got beyond the threshold, but hovered there, looking in. Had the curtain fallen, and was the door closed now, for ever? Should he never see Rosamond again? Never, never, some echo seemed to say. All that was over. Rosmore had closed its doors, never to open them again. No, it had not closed its doors. The door was still open when he turned his back upon his father's house—open, and with his father's wife standing in the doorway, crying, and bidding God bless him. Did she not mean that? did she mean something quite the reverse? Was it she who had really turned him forth, instead of doing her best to keep him there, as had appeared? Archie never said a word of all this to his aunt. He had never mentioned Rosamond to her. Sometimes she asked him about Mr. Adie, the gentleman whom he had brought to see her, who seemed a fine lad, though not much to look at, and would not he do something to set things right. He of all people in the world! Eddy! who had accepted his money, and had stood by and seen him suffer for that, and had not even uttered a word of sympathy. He laughed when his aunt suggested this, and told her Mr. Adie was not a man who would do anything. But of Rosamond he never said a word.

And the days were more heavy than words could say. To have no companions but Mrs. Brown after that houseful of

people, all of them more or less original and full of character—his father, who had so many experiences which came into his daily talk ; Mrs. Rowland, one of the most wonderful of beings to an uneducated young man, with her easy knowledge of so many things which, to him, were a study and labour to know ; and Rosamond, whose knowledge was of so different a kind, yet who, in her self-possession and youthful, grave acquaintance with the world, was almost the most astonishing of all ; and Eddy, who was always so bright, always full of spirits, so perfectly aware of his own deficiencies, that they became qualities, and pleased the people about him more than if he had been ever so clever and instructed. To leave all these, and all the people who came and went, and talked and filled the world with variety of life, even old Rankin in his cottage and Roderick on the hill, and to have no companion but Aunty Jean ! She was more kind than words could say, but had so narrow a little round of being, and was so inveterate, so determined in those certainties which he was almost brought to believe, by dint of much talking, but which his spirit rebelled against all the same. When he received Evelyn's letters he carried them off to his room to read them, and would not expose them to her scrutiny : but he was too much influenced by her opinions and by the tacit agreement in them, to which, in his sore and wounded condition he had been brought, to reply. It would have been a certain disloyalty if, in Mrs. Brown's house, he had answered the appeal of the stepmother who, he had agreed, or almost agreed, with his aunt, must be at the bottom of it all. And what could he have replied ? He had said that he would abide whatever they chose to do to him—arrest, trial, whatever they pleased. He had represented to himself and to his aunt that he expected the policemen, and that from day to day they might come to take him. He had, in fact, so simple was he, felt a tremor in his heart, when he saw in the road, as happened every day, the honest sturdy form of the policeman passing by. It was always possible that this simple functionary might be coming, armed with all the majesty of the law, to take him, though Archie had an internal conviction that, if it was to be done, it would be done more quietly than this, with more precaution than if he had been a housebreaker or stolen a watch. But such delicacies did not enter into Mrs. Brown's mind. She watched the policeman go past daily with his heavy tread, with a trembling certainty that he was coming to arrest her boy : and still more at midnight, when she heard his heavy tread, did she hold her breath, thinking that now the dreaded moment must have come, and on tiptoe of apprehension and anxiety waiting for the sound of his nearer approach, ready to thrust Archie into her bed or under, to conceal him till the danger was over. Mrs. Brown, though she had all the horror of the police common to respectable women of her class, was half disappointed when day after day passed, and no attempt at an arrest was ever made.

"They will have found nae proof," she said, "as how could they have found any proof, there being nane. And they will just be in a puzzle what to do—and yon leddy will either be concocting something, or else she will be working upon your father, poor misguided man. Eh, when I think what James Rowland might have been, with his bonnie dochter to sit at the head of his table, and his son to stand for him before the world, and everything just good nature and peace! But he had to have a grand leddy to scare us a' with her grand ways, and that was thinking of nothing but how to get as much as she could out o' him, and his ain that were the right heirs, out of the way. Ye'll see the next thing will be trouble to Mey. She will not put up with Mey: now she's gotten you banished, the next thing in her head will be something against your sister, till baith the ane and the ither o' you is on the street. And just let her do her worst," said Mrs. Brown with a flush of war, "there will be aye room here. I'm no wanting to see her fall into worse and worse sin, but the sooner she lets out her plans the better for us. And we'll just have Mey back in her bonnie little room, and everything as it was before."

Would everything be as it was before? Alas, Archie feared not. They were not as they had been before. For himself everything was changed. It was in vain to think of returning to his old existence as it had been, when they were all so cheerful together in Sauchiehall Road. He thought of the old suppers, when he would bring in with him two or three of his Philosophers, whom Mrs. Brown would receive with a "Come away ben, come in to the fire. I'm just very glad to see you," and Marion would set herself to tease and provoke: and who would be delighted to reply to both the ladies, to meet Mrs. Brown with compliments upon her supper, and to laugh with Marion to her heart's content. These little parties had been very pleasant. They had appeared to him sometimes, when anything had gone wrong at Rosmore, as happy examples of natural ease and enjoyment. But now he had ceased to have any taste for these gatherings. And Marion: perhaps Marion would be more at home than he was: for at Rosmore her social performances had been still a little in the same kind, personal encounters of laughter and sharp speeches, what Eddy called "chaff," and in which style he was himself a master. Perhaps she could still have made herself happy with the Philosophers. But Archie's day for that was over. The old home could never be what it had been before. He scorned himself for seeing all its little defects, and for feeling the disenchantment, even for the consciousness that Aunt Jean, who was so kind, was scarcely a companion who could make life sweet. She was as his mother. He had never known other care than hers. In the old days he had perhaps wished sometimes that she had not spoken the language of Glasgow in quite so broad a tone. But this was so small a defect; how he hated himself for perceiving much more than

the broad Glasgow speech which jarred upon him ! But it is a very hard ordeal for an old woman in any rank when she has to be the sole companion of a young man ; especially when long knowledge makes him acquainted with every tale she has to tell, and all the experiences which might be interesting to another, but have been familiar to him since ever he began to listen and to understand.

The only relief which Archie had was in attempts, not carried out with any energy, to get a situation in which he could earn his own living. Nothing could have been more false than his present position. He had scarcely any money left, and he had abandoned his father's house for ever. Yet he was supported by his aunt, who received her living from his father, and so it was still by James Rowland's money that his son was nourished, though that son had totally rebelled against him. What if he might cut short or take away altogether Jean Brown's allowance, on account of the rebel she was harbouring ? What if he understood with contempt that his son was thus living upon him still ? Sometimes at night these thoughts would so sting and madden Archie that he would jump out of bed in the morning, resolved before night came again to have got work, whatever it was, and to have made himself independent. But this was so much easier said and thought than done. One man to whom he applied, laughed in his face when he confessed that he was the son of the great Rowland, the Indian Railway Man. "No, no, Mr. Rowland," he said, "the like of you in my office would revolutionize everything. You have too much money to spend, you rich men's sons. You lead away the poor lads that cannot play fast and loose with life like you. Eh ! you have no money ? Well, then, I suppose you have had a tiff with your father and mean to be independent. That's just as bad. You will be diligent for a while and then you will go off like a firework. I have known the sort of thing before. No, no, my young gentleman, the like of you is not for an office like mine." Then poor Archie tried the plan of giving no account of himself at all, except that he was in want of a situation, and could do a little book-keeping, and was acquainted with the axiom that two and two make four. And in this case he was asked for his testimonials, but had no testimonials to offer, no previous character or evidence as to what he could do. And again, but more roughly, he was re-conducted, as the French say, to the simplest door, and his hopes in that instance were over. He then began, as how many a much-disappointed man has done, to study the advertisements in the newspapers, and to answer them sometimes half a dozen in the day. But the sprawling large handwriting which was so fatally like his father's did not find favour in the eyes of men who advertised for clerks. It was admired in Mr. Rowland, the great railway man, and said to mean originality, daring, and a strong will, but in the young would-be clerk it was sharply set down as a bad hand, and he was rejected on that and other reasons

again and again. This dismal play went on from day to day. Perhaps he was not very earnest in it, perhaps he felt that in no combination of circumstances could it be a matter of life and death. If he was not arrested and brought to trial, he would be provided for. The question was whether he would submit his pride to being supported by the man who had flung that cheque in his face. When he asked himself such a question, or rather, when it fluttered across his path, Archie would spring to his feet again with an emphatic "No!" and redouble his exertions.

But he was in a false position, crippled all round by disabilities. Mrs. Brown advised that he should go to the minister, who had known him so long, and could speak for him; but Archie knew what the minister would say: he would remind him of his duty to his father, and that to leave his father's house and bury himself in a position unbecoming Mr. Rowland's son, was ungrateful and unkind. And if he told all his story, and that of the forged cheque, what would the minister say? He would shake his head, he would grow grave, a cloud would gather over his face, he would make haste to end the interview. It would be impossible to believe that Mr. Rowland would make such an accusation without certain proof. Archie knew this was how it would happen, and he could not face such a reception.

Mrs. Brown went herself privately to the foundry, where her own connection with it as the widow of a foreman, and still more, her connection with Rowland, who had risen from it to such unexampled heights, made her still a person of consideration, to speak to the manager. But the manager of the foundry was still more decided.

"If he really wants to learn the work, and his father will say a single word, it will be easily managed."

"But oh, Mr. Blyth, ye must not ask that; for it's just in consequence of two-three unlucky words with his father that he's thinking of taking a situation."

"Then, Mrs. Brown, you should give the young man good advice. What does he think he'll gain by quarrelling with his father? He may be sure his father is twice the man that he is, however clever he may be."

"I was not saying he was very clever," said Mrs. Brown; "but ye see he has a stepmother, and that explains everything: for she just turns the father against them, as is a common occurrence."

"Well," said the manager, "all the same, the best thing he can do is to make it up with his father. Stepmothers are ill things, but they're not always as black as they're painted; and those that are subject to them must just put up with them."

This was all the comfort that Jean got, though she kept part of the report from her nephew.

"He says you will just have to make it up with your papaw: and then the foundry will be open to you, and everything you please."

"That means," said Archie, "that when you don't want a thing you can always have it."

"It's just something like that," Mrs. Brown said.

And thus it appeared there was nothing at all to be done. He went on reading the advertisements, answering sometimes two or three in a day, but never getting any further on. Now and then he would have a letter asking for testimonials, but what testimonials could he obtain? Neither as his father's son, nor as nobody's son, could he make any advance. His father, in like circumstances, would have somehow forced the hand of fate, and made it serve him. He would not have been kept by the want of certificates, nothing would have stopped him in his career. But Archie was not like his father. He was proud, and timid, and sensitive, and easily discouraged; he was even indolent, poor boy—the worst of drawbacks—indolent in mind, though not in body, afraid of any great resolution, hesitating, and unable to resist the course of events. Such a spirit goes down in the struggle for life. He might have been the most steady, careful, punctual of workmen, happy in the support of routine, fixed hours, and a certain understood something to do: but had it been he who had started in the foundry, instead of his father, then Archie would have ended a good man, much respected, but with only a few more shillings a week at the end of his life than at the beginning. And, as was natural, his training had fostered all the weakness in him and none of the strength.

It was strange and ludicrous, yet heart-breaking, to remember that he had been invited by Lady Jean to the Castle, and urged by the Marchbanks, who were ambitious people, and thought Mr. Rowland's money might do very well to increase their own importance in the district, to go over to their grand new mansion, which was much more splendid than Lord Clydesdale's shabby old Castle. Would any of them recognize him, if they could see the shabby young man in search of a situation, who went up and down the Sauchiehall Road? Archie sometimes wondered what he should do if he met Lady Jean. He was more sure that she would see him and stop to speak to him, than he was of any of the others. And she would, no doubt, try to interfere and reconcile him with his father. He used to con little speeches in his mind to make to her, or any other benevolent meddler who might attempt this. He would say, "No; he has accused me of a dreadful thing, without hearing me, without a doubt in his mind but that I did it. I will never make a step, nor hold out a finger to him!" Sometimes the words he put together were even stronger than this. "My father and I are parted for ever. He never cared a penny-piece that he had a son. He took no thought of us when we were children, and he has always been unjust to me. It is better that I should be no trouble to him; and I mean to be no more trouble to him, whatever happens," Archie would say.

Sometimes, on the other hand, he thought that it was more dignified to make no complaint, and a finer thing altogether to say nothing that could injure Rowland in anybody's opinion. And then he would say, with a magnanimity which was a little hurtful to his self-esteem, poor boy, "The life was not one that suited me. I was brought up to think a great deal of work, and I have come back here to do something for myself, as every man should. My father made his own way, and so shall I." Alas, it was very faltering, this proud declaration of independence : he had no heart in it. He was not one of the strenuous souls who make a gospel of work ; on the contrary, Mrs. Brown's gospel had been all the other way, that to do nothing was far the finer thing, and marked the gentleman all the world over. But Archie had touched shoulders with the gentlefolks long enough to be aware that this profession of independence, though it depressed and disappointed Mrs. Brown, was the kind of thing approved in higher circles, and it was the only way in which he could exempt his father from blame.

He had got up very sad upon that November morning. It was not yellow as in London, but gray with a leaden paleness, the houses and pavements and looks of the people all gray, and to a spirit already depressed and miserable, no spring or elasticity anywhere in the dim prospect within, externally, or in the troubled mind. Had life come to an end altogether ? he asked himself ; was there to be nothing in it more than this impatient dulness, producing nothing ? He was a little later for breakfast, as usually happened, Mrs. Brown indulging him in every inclination or disinclination, without the slightest sense of morality, or her old fear that over-indulgence was not good for him. Poor Jean had no longer any thought of that. He was in trouble, poor fellow, and if he was more easy in his mind in the morning before he got up, why disturb him ? or if he took a little comfort in reading a book at night, why urge him to go to bed ? If he was unpunctual for his meals, what did it matter ? "There's naebody but me," Mrs. Brown said, "and if I get my dinner at one o'clock or at three, wha's minding ?" She had not shown this complacence in the old days, when their good training and manners and desire to give little trouble were her pride. Archie was dressing languidly, looking at the shabby clothes about the room with a sort of disgust, the outcome of the gray and miserable morning, and of his own heavy and troubled thoughts. How shabby they were ! and yet not so shabby as common—just fit for a denizen of Sauchiehall Road, as he was. But he was a shabby denizen even for Sauchiehall Road, not up early and out to his cheerful work as was natural there, but coming down late with the habits that might not be amiss in the faultlessly-clothed Eddy, the young man of society, but were disreputable, wretched in him, the Glasgow clerk—not even that—the poor friendless lad, trying to be a Glasgow clerk. Poor Archie had come to a depth in which all that was fantastic

in wretchedness was to be found. There seemed to be nothing good left in him. To be going down to breakfast at ten o'clock was as bad, almost worse than the crime with which he had been charged.

He did not notice the cab which had stopped at the door, though Mrs. Brown did with an immense impulse of excitement; but Archie did hear quite suddenly, so that he felt as if in a dream, the sound of a soft voice—such a voice as was seldom heard in that locality—so clearly toned, so correct in enunciation, so perfectly at the speaker's command—perhaps, however, not that so much as the rest, for there was a tremor in it. He had just opened his door to go down, and his room was exactly at the head of the staircase. He did not at first recognize this voice in the shock of hearing, without preparation, such an organ at all. It said all at once out of the silence, as Archie opened the door—but not to him, to some one down-stairs, “Is Mr. Archibald Rowland here? May I come in? I think—” and here there seemed a pause, “you must be Mrs. Brown.”

“And wha may ye be?” said Jean’s harsh, rough, uncultured voice.

Oh!—it could be as gentle as a dove, that rude voice—there were tones in it sometimes of love and tenderness that music could not equal. Let us do the poor woman no injustice. But when she answered Evelyn’s question, no coal-heaver ever spoke in tones more forbidding. Mrs. Brown divined, as she stood there with the door in her hand, who her visitor was, and all the worst side of her nature turned to meet this interloper, this stepmother, the woman who had secured James Rowland’s love and his money, and was the enemy of his children. “She shall hear the truth from me if she never heard it in her life before,” Jean said to herself. And the torrent of her wrath rose up in a moment like the waterspout of Eastern seas.

## CHAPTER XLV

ARCHIE made, as he thought, but one step down the stairs: he fell into the little passage, which led to the parlour, like a thunderbolt. “Aunt Jean, it is Mrs. Rowland!” he cried.

“And if it is Mrs. Rowland,” said Jean, “who is she to come here as if the place belonged to her? which it dis not, nor ever will, were she the queen o’ the whole land.”

“Archie,” said the voice of Evelyn from beyond the stout, full form that stood like a solid barrier between him and his father’s wife; “ask your aunt kindly to let me in. I have been travelling all night, and I bring you good news; but I am very tired. Please to let me in.”

Mrs. Brown was rent by conflicting sentiments. To resist such an entreaty is as hard for a Scotswoman of her class as for an

Arab in the desert. The claims of hospitality are as urgent with one as with the other. She did not know how to refuse, to keep a tired woman, appealing to her, at arm's length. Further, thoughts of fresh tea to be masked, and eggs to be boiled, flashed into her mind across the sullen background of enmity which made her stand fast in stubborn resistance. It was a sin against her house to close the door, to oppose the entrance of the stranger. She had never done such a thing, scarcely even to the gangrel-body who was not to be trusted in the neighbourhood of a silver spoon, before, and the necessity hurt her. But to let in this fine lady, this proud woman, this stranger and alien person, who had (presumably) hunted Archie from his father's house— Oh, no, no !

"There are plenty hotels in Glasgow where the leddy can go," she said, standing firm. "Ye can go with her, ye fool that ye are, and be beguiled by her flattering tongue, for anything I care."

"May not I come in ?" said Evelyn, with great surprise. "I have been hoping all night for a little rest and a welcome. You surely will not refuse me half an hour's rest, if I promise to go away in half an hour ?" She smiled and looked at Archie, whose anxious face appeared over Mrs. Brown's shoulder. "I did not know," she said, "that your aunt had any objection to me."

"Ainy objection !" cried Mrs. Brown, "when you have just made his life a burden to him, and ruined all his prospects, poor lad, and closed the doors o' his father's house !"

"But I have not done that," said Mrs. Rowland, surprised. "You are making a great mistake, surely. His prospects are not ruined, nor are his father's doors closed against him, as he knows. But now," she said, tears of weakness coming into her eyes, "they are thrown open as if with the sound of a trumpet. Archie, thank God that it is all cleared up and found out. Will you not let me in to tell him how it has been discovered and his honour cleared ? Don't you care for his honour and good name, you who have been a mother to him—more than for anything else in the world ?"

"I never doubted either one or the other," said Mrs. Brown ; "it will be nae discovery to me."

"Nor to me either," said Evelyn, "as he knows : but proofs are good things. If you will not let me in," she added, with a smile, which was very near the other manifestation of feeling—tears, "I must sit down on the steps, and he can hear my story here."

"You can come in," said Mrs. Brown, opening the door wide. "I will have nae play-acting on my doorsteps. Archie, ye can take this leddy into the parlour. It's easy for the like of such a woman to get over a laddie like you. Ye ken nothing of their wiles ; how should ye ?" She followed as she spoke into the parlour, where she pulled forward an easy-chair violently, talking all the time. "They just get ye back under their thumb when

it pleases them, until the time comes when your downfa's doomed. Here's a footstool till ye. It'll no doubt be a great satisfaction to feel that Jean Brown's house is but a poor place, no a chair good enough for the like of you to sit down—”

“Indeed, it is very comfortable, and a great ease to sit down and be quiet for a moment. Thank you kindly,” said Evelyn. “I have been travelling, I may say, for four days. On Tuesday night I went up to town—to London, I mean—and there I have been to and fro all the time, and came up again here during the night. So I have an excuse for being very tired.”

“Lord bless us,” said Mrs. Brown, with wide-open eyes, “and what was the need of that? I’m thinking with Jims Rowland’s money in your pouch ye have little need to weary yourself in ainy way.”

Going down to the Kyles of Bute for a day’s holiday was the most exhausting experience Mrs. Brown had ever had, and she had not got the better of that fatigue for several days. She was a little overawed by this description, as indeed Evelyn, with pardonable guile, had intended her to be.

She darted out of the room as she spoke, perhaps that she might not yield more to the influence of this soft-spoken woman (“but they can speak soft enough, and sweet enough, when it’s for their ain ends,” she said to herself), leaving Evelyn alone with Archie. She held out her hand to him with a smile. “I am so tired,” she said, “that I am scarcely capable of telling you my story. I feel the wheels going in my head, and a sort of perpetual movement. Now, some people travel by night constantly, and are never the worse.”

She spoke thus, partly because she was indeed very tired, and partly to accustom Archie to the shock of seeing her, speaking with her, being thus brought back to all the stormy emotions of that last eventful night. She half understood him and the reluctance with which, now that his aunt’s violent opposition was taken away, he touched her hand, and accepted her confidence. Archie was not amiable though he might be weak. At the sight of her seated there, and no longer held at bay, all the hard things that had been said, and which he himself had united in saying, against her and her power over his father, surged up into his mind. For anything he knew she might be the malign influence that Jean Brown believed her to be. She might be, for some occult reason of her own, trying to draw him again within her power, to represent herself as his benefactress, only that she might more fully and completely ruin him the next time. This had been suggested to him so often that he almost believed it: and it came back with all that force of hostility which replaces remorse, in the reaction from a momentary softness, which is in itself a reaction too. He had been ready to pluck his aunt away—to bid her stand aside for shame, while she held this woman at bay: but now that the woman was there enthroned, without opposition,

holding out her hand to him, with that grace of profoundest, unapproachable superiority, all his rebellious feelings started forth again. He felt no curiosity to know what she had been doing, or what was the result of which she seemed so proud. How could it affect him? He represented to himself that even to speak to him of being cleared was an insult, and her brag of her fatigue and exertions revolted him. What did it matter to him if she was tired or not? What did he care if the wheels were going in her head? He touched her hand because it would be uncivil, and show his bad breeding, if he refused it--and then he turned his back and stood looking out of the window. It was the same attitude as Eddy had assumed, though for a different reason, and Evelyn, in her exhaustion, smiled over the resemblance. She said to herself that boys of that age were very much alike, though so different, and that after all the most accomplished young man of the world had only the same ways of showing emotion as were patent to the simplest of his kind. She said after a moment: "You don't seem to have much curiosity as to what I have been doing, Archie?"

"No," he said curtly; "why should I? You were so polite as to say it had something to do with me: but I don't see what you could have to do with me."

"Come," she said, "you must not be cross, Archie. Your aunt is, but I excuse her—for she does not know, and perhaps may even think I don't know—that there is no virtue in being uncivil."

"She is not uncivil," he said, rudely. "She is the kindest woman in the world."

"The one, unfortunately, does not always make the other impossible," she said softly, and then she sighed. "Is it necessary to begin all over again? Archie," she said, "I thought we had passed the preliminary stage."

"I don't know what you call the preliminary stage."

"Well, well," she said with an impatient sigh.

And then it occurred to Archie that there was something ludicrous in the position, in his sullen stand in front of the window, while she sat, shut out from the light by his shadow, endeavouring to bring him to reason, behind. He felt, too, that the reason was on her side, and the obstinacy and folly on his, which did not make him more amiable, nor help to free him from his angry resistance. What roused him was the jar of a rush against the door, which presently was flung open, striking against the wall, by the rapid entrance of a tray, borne by Mrs. Brown herself in front of her, covered with a white cloth, and bearing all the materials of an excellent breakfast. Jean set it down with a dash upon the table, pushing aside the carefully arranged books, and almost breaking, in her vehemence, the shade which covered a group of wax water-lilies which filled the place of honour. "Lift off the flowers and the books, Archie," she cried; "you maunna let even your worst enemy hunger and thirst when ye bring him in to your house."

"Thank you for your kindness," said Evelyn, with a faint laugh. "But why am I to be supposed his enemy? It is a little cruel, don't you think, without any proof."

"What maisters that as long as ye get what you want?" said Jean; "and I'll allow that you want a cup of tea after your journey, whatever is your objeck, maudam. And ye had better go ben and get your breakfast, Archie. I will see that the leddy gets everything she wants."

"You treat me," said Evelyn, put on her mettle, "a little as Jael did her enemy. Butter in a lordly dish, but the nail and the hammer ready for use behind."

"There's neither nail nor hammer in my hands," said Mrs. Brown. "And I never liked the woman. It's true that she was commended by the prophetess, but I often thought yon was a slip o' the tongue in Deborah, carried away by her feelin's, as is rale common with women, and no thinking what she was saying. Na, I am nae Jael. Besides he was weel kent for an enemy to Israel, and that's mair than ony individual. I hope ye find the tea to your taste; there is no pushion in it: and the eggs are our ain laying, for I've aye kept a wheen poultry. It was good for the bairns to have them caller and good—when I had the bairns with me."

"I have often thought of you," said Evelyn, "and of how you must have missed them. It was too abrupt at last. If you had but come with them to Rosmore——"

"Na na, none o' that. And ye may spare me your peety, Mrs. Rowland: I'm no a woman that is fond o' peety. It was just done, and the thing is over, and there is no more to be said: if ye had kept them happy when ye had them!"

"That is always the hardest thing to do."

"Eh, woman," said Mrs. Brown, "if ye had been a woman like the women in the books! There's such arises from time to time—that does her duty to the man's bairns and puts her feelin's in her pocket, if she doesna like them; though how it was possible no to like them is mair than I can tell. She should have been up and tellt him, when there was suspicion thrown upon that lad, that it wasna true. If they had threepit it till they were black in the face, she would have said she didna believe a word. She would have cried out, 'Look at the lad'" (a more sullen, hangdog countenance than Archie's at this moment could scarcely have been conceived), "'and hear his ain saying aboon a' the world!'"

There was a little stir at the window, and a harsh voice broke out suddenly where Archie stood: "That's just what she did," he said.

"If it had been me," cried Jean, inspired with her theme, and noting no interruption, "though I'm nae pattern, I would have cried out, 'Oh, get away from me, ye ill-thinking man! will ye daur to say there's a lie in that laddie's bonny broo! I'm no his parent, like you (I would have said), but a woman with e'en in

my head, and I ken the truth when I see it. My word for his! (I would have cried) yon's the truth and a' the rest is lies!' Woman! oh, woman! I'm no a pattern; I'm no a grand and bonny leddy like you; but that's what I would have done—plain Jean Brown, standing here before ye—if it had been me!"

Jean plumped down into a seat at the end of this tirade, and burst, as was natural, into hot torrents of tears, to which she gave vent freely, rocking herself to and fro with the primitive usage of passion. Evelyn had not said a word. She had followed the wild eloquence of the other with a tremulous smile and tears in her eyes. She did not even look at Archie, to remind him. He, for his part, had not known how to contain himself while the scene went on. He caught at his aunt's arm, which she used in the free gesture of her class to emphasize her words, and at her dress: but it was not till Mrs. Brown's sobs began to grow less that the lad spoke.

"Aunt Jean," he said, "it is you at the end that has put all the clouds away. We've been slanderers, and evil speakers, you and me. We have just done our utmost, and all failed. We have wanted to lay the blame of it on her, and to think that it was her doing. But you've cleared up all that. Aunt Jean," he said, with a quick touch of his hand upon her shoulder, "everything you said you would have done, she did. Do you hear me? —all you said, she said. She has just done that and more. My father, if he were here, would tell you. You've shown me the truth anyway, whether you will see it yourself or not. She has done all that—and more!"

Archie turned away and made a round of the room like a blind man, and then he went up to Evelyn on the other side. "I humbly beg your pardon with all my heart and soul," he said. "I'll maybe never enter my father's doors. I'll maybe never come to anything as long as I live. And what you have come to tell me is just like Hebrew and Greek to me, and I'm not caring what it is; but she's cleared my eyes, and I just beg your pardon with all my heart and soul."

"Hush, Archie, hush," said Mrs. Rowland, giving him her hand (which he shook awkwardly and dropped, poor boy, having no graceful suggestions in him, not knowing what to do with a lady's hand in such circumstances, as Eddy did); "there is no pardon needed: and Mrs. Brown, shake hands with me, for we understand each other fully, and I agree in every word you say. If James did not do so, it was perhaps because he was a man, as you say, and wanted proof; and because, also, oh believe it, Archie! you are dearer to your father than to any one, and to doubt you is more than he can bear."

"There is somebody at the door," cried Mrs. Brown, hastily drying her tears; "and we are all begritten, and will do nothing but expose ourselves. I'm no quick enough to follow a' you've said. And I canna tell what I've said to put ye baith in such a commotion; nothing but what was very simple, for I'm not

a person of edication, like you. But if Archie's pleased, I'm pleased: and you're a bonny woman, Mrs. Rowland, and I canna resist ye. If ye'll take it, I'll gi'e ye my hand. And Archie, lad, go out to the door, and see that no strange person is let in here."

Archie opened the door, and fell back with a cry of astonishment, and Rowland came in, looking round him upon all the signs of emotion which still were very apparent, with wondering eyes. He tried to veil his surprise in the sternness of aspect which was natural to a man whom all the persons present had bitterly offended. He was among a company, indeed, of offenders; all of them had sinned against him; and, perhaps, in present circumstances, his wife the most of all. He was still utterly perplexed as to the cause of her flight to London: and what connection there could be between that and her presence here, it was impossible to divine. He looked round upon them sternly, trying to suppress other sentiments. It was very strange to Evelyn to meet, for the first time in their life together, a look of disapproval in her husband's eyes. After the first shock and surprise of his appearance, she had sunk again into her chair, holding out her hand: but he made no response, either to the smile or to the stretched-out hand.

"I saw my wife," he said to Mrs. Brown briefly, with whom he had exchanged a silent greeting; "I saw my wife in the street, and followed her here. I know no business she could have here. I should apologize for the intrusion." He took no notice of his son, who had instinctively drawn aside. "It surprises me very greatly, Evelyn, to see you here."

"Oh, Jims! sae did it me; but your bonny leddy has none but a good motive for coming: I can see that noo."

"I do not wonder," said Evelyn calmly: she was not afraid of her husband; "but you will soon understand. I am surprised also to see you. Did you get my telegram, James?"

"I got no telegram," he cried angrily, "and I thought I had forbidden any intercourse with—with—"

"Oh, no," she said, "you could not have done that: first because you have too much respect for your wife to give her an order which was unworthy: and because you could not interfere with my own judgment. On the contrary, I came here—to bring our boy home."

"I gave no authority for any such mission," Rowland cried, "and I will not have it! I will not have it!" He was trembling behind his anger, which was like a veil thrown on to disguise the strange movements and agitations in his mind. What did she mean? She had not disturbed herself, except for a moment, and still lay back in the big chair pale with weariness, yet smiling in his face the more dark he looked. What had she in her mind to make her smile so? Why did she say she had come to bring the boy? She said *our* boy. What, oh what was the meaning of it all? Archie stood dark as a thundercloud, dumb,

taking no more note of his father than his father did of him. (They both saw every movement of each other, every change of countenance, every turn, had it been of a finger.) And Jean had evidently been crying, and was ready to burst out again at any moment. It was she that interposed now.

"Jims," she said, "your bonny leddy is just aff a journey ; she's been travelling all night. I can't tell where ye have been yourself, but you look very wearit too. You can see her cup o' tea standing by her that she hasna touched. I poured it out, but I hadna the grace to hold my tongue, and just was mad at her, and abused her sae that the darlin' creature, as she is, never swallowed a drop, and her faintin' for want. But I've been convicted out of my ain very mouth," cried Jean, "every word that I spoke has come back upon me : for I threepit up against her that I would have done this and that. Me ! a bonny person to set up for a pattern ! and it turned out that everything I said she had done, and mair. And now you come bursting in, just as unreasonable. Say out, man, what ye would have her to do, and you'll find she has done it—and mair ! But for ainy sake," cried Jean, sobbing, with her apron to her eyes, "let the bonny leddy get a moment's peace, and tak' her cup o' tea."

"Dear Mrs. Brown," cried Evelyn, between laughing and crying, "you're a good friend ! and I do want a little tea. And I am not afraid of him nor any of you. If you have not been home, nor got my telegram, you will want a full account of me, James, for I have been in London by myself, ever since you went away. Yes, it is true, I took advantage of your absence to go away. A wicked woman could not have done more. As soon as you had gone I set out. It would not be wonderful if you suspected me. But I do not know of what," she added, with a low laugh. There was something in her laugh that overcame altogether her middle-aged angry husband. He was not angry : all that was a pretence ; nor did he know what he suspected her of. At this moment he suspected her justly of what she had done, of having found some way, he could not tell how, of making an end of the trouble which was growing at his heart. When he had left Rosmore there was something in her eye that had made him believe she would do this. He had given her no permission, yet he had a confidence that she would act somehow—he could not tell how—and clear everything up. It had been a horrible disappointment to him, coming back with that confidence in his mind, to find that she was absent, to be told that she had gone to ask advice—on his affairs. And here he had been utterly perplexed, and had not known what to think. That was the history of his many changes. Suspect her ? No, he did not know, any more than she did, of what. He had never suspected her—unless it was of failing to fulfil that wild hope of his suffering heart. But something told him now that she had not failed. He stood by as grave as a whole bench of judges, and watched with a solemn countenance while

she took her tea. There had been a little struggle with Mrs. Brown, who protested that it must be cold, and that she must make more. But Evelyn had been triumphant in this, and now sat eating and drinking before them all, while they looked on with solemnity. There was something of the highest comic absurdity in the aspect of the father and son, one more serious than the other, standing watching her at her simple meal. Mrs. Brown hovered about her, imploring her to take this and that—an egg, some scones, a chop that could be got in an instant, marmalade, that was considered very good, of her own making—and many things beside. But the two men stood in portentous silence, never moving a muscle, as grave as if her little piece of toast was a matter of life and death. Archie was agitated vaguely, he knew not how: but his father's mind was like a great flowing river, held by a thread, of ice, which the first ray of sunshine would clear away. He bore the aspect of anger still; the cloud hung upon his brow; but all restraint was ready to be swept away, and the full tide to flow forth. He stood, however, black as night, and watched his wife at her breakfast. The strangest, humorous, nay comic sight.

And Evelyn was worn out with all her exertions. She was so weak, with her nerves all so relaxed after their long tension, that they were able to resist no temptation. She watched her husband and his son with a growing sense of the ludicrous. They were so solemn, watching her like doctors over a case, as if the manner in which she set down her tea-cup, or put her morsel of bread into her mouth, were symptoms of the gravest kind. She watched them as long as nature would hold out. It was not until she had finished her cup of tea, and ate her last morsel. She put her plate away with her hand, and they both moved slightly with the touch, as if it were the signal for some revelation. And this in her weak condition was too much for Evelyn. She burst out with a laugh of such hilarity that all the silent room echoed. She laughed till the tears flowed down her cheeks.

"Oh, James, forgive me," she cried, "you are like an owl, serious as midnight and the dark: and Archie is just like you, as like you as—what is the word? two peas. Archie, come here and give me your hand. Do you remember that I once told you I believed every word you said?"

A murmur came from Archie's throat. He was half affronted, half angry, offended by that laugh which had startled him in his unexpressed excitement. But yet he went and stood by her as she said.

"I was wrong to laugh," said Evelyn, "but I could not help it. If you had seen yourselves, you would have laughed too. James, I got a clue just before you left home, but I could not tell you of it, because of Sir John: and then you went away with him. I don't know that I should have told you: and I was glad you went away. It was the opportunity I wanted. I went up

to town, and I saw the man who— James!—what is the matter? Do you know?"

He had lifted up his hands with a great exclamation of dismay. "Him!" he cried, and no more.

"I think," said Evelyn with sudden gravity, "your father knows—*independent* of me. Archie, go and get ready to come home. It is a very sad story. Your father has the best heart, he is more sorry for him that has sinned than glad for him that is saved. I repent of my silly laugh. For though you have not done it, another poor boy has done it. James! God bless you, you have the best heart of us all."

## CHAPTER XLVI

It was a very curious breakfast party: for this of course was what had to follow, neither father nor son having yet had any breakfast, notwithstanding all the agitations of the morning. And Mr. Rowland and his son, their minds being relieved, had a very different idea of what was implied in the word breakfast from that entertained by Evelyn, whose cup of tea and morsel of "bap" had satisfied all her needs. They meant other things, and their meaning was more promptly understood by Mrs. Brown than anything that had gone before. It had gone to her heart to see the eggs, the marmalade, and the scones, all neglected upon the tray which she had brought for Mrs. Rowland with the hospitality of a savage woman to her enemy: but now the opportunity was within reach of distinguishing herself in the most lavish way. She was continually on the road between the kitchen and parlour, hurrying, with one dish after another, eggs, finnan haddock, fried ham, everything that her substantial system of cooking understood. It was Evelyn's turn to sit and watch the progress of a meal which was so very different from her own, which she did with mingled amusement and amazement, and something of that feminine mixture of pleasure and laughing disdain for the men whose appetites are not interfered with by emotion, which is so common. She liked to see them eat with a certain maternal satisfaction in their well-being, though not so marked as that of Mrs. Brown, who ran to and fro supplying them, with tears of delight in her eyes—but with little jibes and jests at the ease of the transition from all their excitement to that excellent meal, which Archie, always afraid of being laughed at, was uncertain how to accept, though satisfied by seeing that they did not affect his father's equanimity. Presently, however, these little jests began to slacken, the tone of her voice changed, and when, after a moment or two of silence, Rowland looked up to say something, he perceived, with the most unexpected sudden rush of emotion to his own eyes, and feeling to his

heart, that his wife had fallen asleep. He had not understood Jean's signals, who stood by with her finger on her lip, and who was drying her eyes with the big white apron which she had slipped on to save her gown, as she ran to and fro with the dishes which Bell in the kitchen was fully occupied in preparing.

"She's just wearit to death," Jean whispered with a small sob, "and vexed wi' the contradictions o' sinners, after a' she's done for you. Just hold your tongues now, and let her get a little peace, ye twa greedy men." The elaborate pantomime in which the rest of the meal was carried on; the care of both to subdue the sound of their knives and forks, and suppress the little jar of the cups and saucers; and the super-careful clearing away, performed on tiptoe by Bell, as being less heavy in her movements than her mistress, aided by Archie, would have been very amusing to Evelyn could she have seen through her closed eyelids what was going on: but her sleep was very sincere, the involuntary and profound slumber of exhaustion, from which relief of mind, and the delightful ease of success, took every sting. When she came to herself it was in the quiet of a room given up to her repose, the blind drawn down, every sound hushed, and a large shawl—Mrs. Brown's best, a real Indian shawl sent by Rowland in former days, of which the good woman was more proud than of anything she possessed—carefully arranged over her. Her husband sat near, not moving a finger, watching over her repose. Evelyn woke with a slight start, and it was a minute or two before she realized that she was not in the corner of a railway carriage nor the forlorn solitude of the London hotel, but that her mission was accomplished, and all hostilities vanquished. It was perhaps Jean's shawl that made this most clearly apparent to her. It was a beautiful shawl, the colours like nothing but those fine tints of Cashmere with which her Indian experiences had made her fully acquainted, the texture so soft, the work so delicate. The first intimation that Rowland had of his wife's waking, were the words, said to herself with a little sigh of pleasure, "He must have sent her this."

"What did you say, my darling?" he said, getting up quickly.

"Oh, you are there, James! I said you must have sent it to her, and I meant she must approve of me at last, or she would not have covered me with her beautiful shawl."

"Do you care for her approval, Evelyn?"

"Care!" she said, "of course I care," then added with a laugh, "A woman can never bear to be disapproved of. I suppose I must have been asleep."

"Like a baby," said her husband, with his laugh of emotion, "and very nice you looked, my dear, but utterly tired out."

"Yes, I was very tired," she acknowledged. "I have done

nothing but run about, and then wait, which was still worse. And then—" She sat up suddenly throwing off her coverings. "James! you know—how did you know?"

"Tell me first," he said. "It is very little I know—and then I will tell you."

"That is a bargain," she answered smiling, and then with many interruptions of remark and commentary, she told him her story: Rankin's hint, and Marion's first of all.

"Marion! Marion told you that?" he cried in amazement.

"She told me nothing. I do not for a moment suppose that she knew anything," cried Evelyn, scenting another danger, "but she is very keen-witted, and must have felt that if there was a mystery—"

"A great deal too keen-witted, the little—" The substantive intended to come in here was a profane one, and Rowland felt on his side a danger too.

"And then I had all the trouble in the world to see him. I almost forced an entrance at last, and by the threat of invading him in his own room—indeed," said Evelyn, "it was not a threat only, I should have gone to his room, as I could find him no other where. But the threat sufficed and he came. James! the boy has committed a great crime, but oh, my heart is sore for Eddy. He has no mother."

"You think you might have been his mother, Evelyn?"

"I don't know how you should have divined it—but I do: thank God that I am not; but sometimes I cannot help thinking what a terrible fate I might have had, but for the goodness of God—"

"Working through the wickedness of man."

"Don't raise such questions, James! Don't make me think of it at all. I have been spared that fate, thank God, and saved for a very different one. It is very fantastic, but it gives me a feeling to the children—"

She had put out her hand to him, and he held it in his own. He gave it a grip, now, more loving than tender. "It gives me," he said, "a feeling too."

"Not of—dislike—not of—"

"What do you take me for, Evelyn? A man like me is often very fantastic, I allow, though nobody would think it. I am so touched by the thought that they might have been your children, and so glad of the escape we have had that they aren't; and so sorry for them, poor things, for losing the best chance they could have had."

At this curiously mixed statement of what was so real and true to the speakers, Evelyn laughed, with tears in her voice, pressing her husband's hand. And then she said, "Now tell me, James, how you know?"

This was not so easy as her task. The middle-aged man of business blushed as youths and maidens are alone considered

capable of doing. "Is it not enough that I might have guessed like Marion, or that Marion might have communicated her guess to me?"

"Anything is enough that you tell me," she said.

"That drives all fiction out of my mouth. The reason I knew, Evelyn, was that I was there."

"There!" she cried in amazement, raising herself upright.

"There! more or less. I thought you must have seen me when you came out as you did, with a bounce, not like you. I was, I am ashamed to tell you, like a wretched spy, on the other side of the road, watching where you had gone."

She turned her face to him with such a look of wide-eyed astonishment that his countenance fell. "I have to beg your pardon, Evelyn. Hear my story first, and then you can say what you please. I was just wild with disappointment and misery when I found you gone. Then—it was on a hint—I guessed where you were. I got up to London on Friday morning—was it only yesterday?—and they told me at the hotel you had just gone out, that if I followed you—I did follow you, and came up to you. But I couldn't speak to you. How could I ask an account from my wife of where she was going, or tell her I had followed her? I just followed still, and then I saw that you went in, and guessed that you had an interview upstairs, and then an interview down-stairs. And then—Well, when we both got back to the hotel I was more certain than ever that I could not show that I was spying upon you, Evelyn, and was ashamed even to say that I wondered what you were doing. I knew whose house it was, by instinct, I suppose. And then, Eddy came to you in the afternoon. And I could think of nothing else but that—when I thought you had been occupied about my boy, it was this other boy that was filling your mind. And then you came back, and I with you in the next carriage, though you never saw me. And then to my wonder and astonishment I watched you come here. So that when you said you had seen the man who—committed that forgery—I knew at once who it was."

Rowland concluded his narrative with his head bent down, the words coming slowly from his lips. He did not meet the eyes which he felt sure must be full of wrath, and every moment he feared that the hand which held his (his own had become too limp with alarm to hold anything) should drop it, or fling it away in indignation. Evelyn held it tight, giving it a fierce little pressure from time to time. No doubt presently she would fling it from her. And there was a silence which was awful to the penitent.

"I never," she said at last, "could have recognized you in the rôle of a detective, James."

"No," he said with a furtive glance at her, slightly encouraged by the sound of her voice, though doubtful that the tightness with which she held his hand was preliminary to the sudden

tossing away from her, which he expected and feared. "No, it is not exactly my kind of way."

"But I recognize you," she said, "very well, when you were not able to say to your wife that you suspected her, when you were ashamed to let me know that you wondered what I was doing. Of what did you suspect me, James?"

She did not loose his hand, but he freed it unconsciously, rising to his feet in overwhelming agitation at this question. Of what did he suspect her? Good heavens! Rowland's forehead grew cold and wet, his eyes rose, troubled, to meet those with which she was regarding him—large, clear, wide-open. It was cruel of Evelyn: the man was so intimidated that he could scarcely reply, though indeed he had been all the time *dans son droit*.

"I—did not suspect you of anything. Tut!" he said recovering himself, "why shouldn't I say the worst? I suspected you of going to consult that man about your husband's affairs."

"Did you indeed, James? You supposed I was going to consult a man—of whom I have a right to think everything that is worst in a woman's eyes, whom I neither trust, nor esteem, nor believe a word that he says—upon the concerns of my honourable husband, which are my concerns, and more than mine, just so much more than mine that I am trusted with them? You could suppose that, James?"

"No," said the unfortunate man, moving from one leg to the other in the extremity of his perplexity and distress. "No, you're right, Evelyn, I didn't. I suspected nothing. I was ashamed, bitterly ashamed of the whole affair. It was nothing but the suggestion of that little—I mean it was the madness of my disappointment at finding you not there. What I meant to say," he added, taking a little courage, "was that perhaps if it had been anybody else but you——"

"No," she said. "No sophistry, James: whoever it had been, it would have been the same thing. You would have been ashamed to ask an honest woman any such question. You are not the kind of man to believe in any shameful thing. Most men believe in every shameful thing—that man, for instance, whom you thought I was going to consult."

He hung his head a little under this taunt, but then he said in a certain self-justificatory tone, "You saw him after all."

"I saw him," she said, a slight flush for the first time rising on her face, "against my will. I was not aware he was there. I had heard from Rosamond that he was still abroad: not that I mean you to think," she added at once, "that it would have made the least difference had I known he was there. I should have gone—to throw light upon this trouble—anywhere in the world—had the devil himself and not Edward Saumarez been there. I don't know what is the worst," she said impulsively. "I think the other one's perhaps belied, but not he."

Evelyn's strong speech made her falter for a moment and be silent, which encouraged Rowland to say, putting out his hand

again, "Devil he may be, but I'm cutting a poor enough figure. Do you think you will be able to forgive me, Evelyn? I will never do it again."

The rueful humility of the tone restored Mrs. Rowland to herself. She laughed, putting her hand in his. "Yes, do it again," she said, "for there never was anything so delightful in the world as a man who follows his wife off to London, where she is perhaps going astray, and is ashamed to ask her what she is doing when he finds her there. You make me proud of my Othello: for he is quite a new one, better than Shakespeare's. Oh, James! what a difference, what a difference! To think you should both be men of the same race, that hideous satyr, and you!"

To say that good James Rowland had any very clear idea what she was raving about would be untrue. He knew no resemblance he could possibly have to Othello, nor what Shakespeare had to do with it. Neither was he clear who was the hideous satyr. But he knew that this trust on Evelyn's part was to his own credit and praise, and he was pleased, as the best of men may be.

"Well," he said, recovering himself entirely, "we will consider that incident over, Evelyn, and me the most happy man in Scotland, be the other who he may. I owe Archie some amends for suspecting him, but you will allow—"

"I will allow nothing," said Evelyn. "Had you treated him as you treat me, and been ashamed to suggest such a thing to your son as you own you were to your wife, we might all have been spared a great deal of pain. But now it's all over, thank God, and you will know better another time."

"Don't fall upon me and slay me on another ground after you've forgiven me on your own," he said. And then he grew suddenly grave and asked, "Did he give you any details—did he tell you why he did it, the unhappy boy?"

"He asked me only that the cheque might be destroyed. I thought you would think Archie's exculpation cheaply purchased at that cost."

"Of course, of course," he said, with a wave of his hand.

"And gave me this, which he said would to you be proof enough."

Mr. Rowland took the scrap of paper, with his own name written upon it, in different degrees of perfection. He looked at it intently for a minute, then threw it into the smouldering fire, where it made a momentary blaze and flickered away.

"If the thing could be destroyed like that!" he said. Then after a pause, "The question is, what is to be done with that unhappy boy?"

"James! I promised him exemption, safety. He was never to hear of it again."

"Tut, tut!" he said. "It's you now, Evelyn, that shows a want of understanding. Do you think anything in the world

would make me bring to disgrace and ruin that boy! The creature's not of age," he cried. "What are we to do with him, to make it still possible that he should live his life?"

"James," cried Evelyn, after a pause, "I must tell you. There are such curious differences. I don't think that Eddy is—very unhappy. He has his moments of seriousness, but generally he takes it lightly enough."

"I don't see that that makes it any better. Are we to leave him among his debts and his follies, to be tempted to do such a thing again? He should be separated from that horrible,—what do you call it—society life of his, and set to work."

"I don't think you would ever get him to work, James!"

"He should be taken, anyhow, out of that whirl of wretched life."

"He could not live out of it, James!"

"Yet he managed to exist for a whole month at Rosmore."

"Oh, my dear James, he was born in it, and he will die in it. He could not manage to exist out of that atmosphere of society."

"I have a great mind to try," Rowland said, walking about the room. "What is the good of saving a man from drowning with one hand, if ye pitch him back into the water with the other? I like radical measures. I would send him right away to some sort of work."

She said nothing, but shook her head.

"By George, I will try!" cried her husband, "if you were to shake your head off, my dear. I won't let the laddie perish without a try to save him. He's saved me, and the peace of my house. You may say he put it in jeopardy first: but it took some pluck, Evelyn, to put that, and his life, so to speak, in your hands. He must have good meanings in him. I will send for the lad—I will——"

"I must tell you something first, James, and then you shall act as you please. He said to me, 'This means that I shall never see any of you again. And I was fond of little Marion—though she doesn't deserve it any more than I do.' It was a curious thing to say."

Rowland gave a long whistle, and a twinkle of fun arose in his eye. "She doesn't deserve it any more than he does!" he said. The speech did not make him angry, as Evelyn had feared. It made him laugh, and his laugh was not ungenial. "By Jove!" he said to himself: but he did not explain to Evelyn the idea which was veiled by that exclamation. There was, indeed, no need that there should be any meaning at all.

## CHAPTER XLVII

THE return of the united family to Rosmore was, it is scarcely necessary to say, scrutinized by many keen and eager eyes, all aware that there had been something wrong, all, or almost all, glad to see that the something had so soon come to nothing. Except that Archie was exceptionally shabby in his old clothes, and that he was deeply conscious of this fact, and accordingly kept as much as possible in the background, there was nothing to show that the party was anything more than the most ordinary party returning from some joint expedition. The people in the steamboat, however, allowed their knowledge to be revealed by effusive and unnecessary expressions of satisfaction in the return of Mr. Rowland and his wife and son, which were quite uncalled for, in view of the fact that neither of the former had been gone for more than a few days. "I can scarcely express to you the satisfaction I feel in seeing you back," the minister said, with a significant grip of his wealthy parishioner's hand; and Miss Eliza, who happened to be coming by the same boat, fell upon Evelyn with a shriek of joy. "I've not seen so delightful a sight for years as the sight of your bonny face, with all your belongings round you," Miss Eliza said, holding out her left hand and a beaming smile to Archie. These signs of popular satisfaction were received by Mrs. Rowland not exactly with offence, but a little coldly, in view of the fact that nobody had any right, even by inference, to remark upon what was so entirely a family matter. But her husband, who was in great spirits, and inclined to make friends with all the world, received these effusive salutations with pleasure, and without inquiring how much they knew of the circumstances which made this home-coming remarkable. He was perhaps more used to the warmth of Scotch neighbours, and understood it better. At the pier the two girls were waiting, both of them curious and a little excited. Marion's eyes were glittering like beads with a desire to know, and Rosamond, though she held up her head with her accustomed calm, and repressed all consciousness of anything unusual, betrayed in a slight dilation of her nostril, and momentary quiver of her lip, her share of the general excitement. She slipped aside from the carriage in order to leave the family undisturbed in their reunion, which was indeed a thing very little desired by any of its members: but was joined by Archie before she had gone far. He was too glad to escape from the sensation of the prodigal's return, although more and more conscious of what he felt to be the chief feature about him—his exceedingly shabby coat.

"I am glad you have come home," said Rosamond.

"So am I, more or less," said Archie.

"I suppose you like the freedom of being away. But the

more you are free to go, the more endurable the dulness should be. When one knows one can get quit of it at any moment, one does not mind."

"I was not thinking of the dulness," said Archie; "it has been the other way round with me. I suppose it's contradiction. When you are shut out from your home, you take a longing for it. It's through your brother somehow, I can't tell how, that I've come back now."

"Through Eddy!"

"I don't know how; he has cleared up something. It is queer, isn't it," said Archie, with a laugh, "that a little beggar like that—I beg your pardon, Miss Saumarez, I forgot for the moment—"

"It is true enough," said Rosamond gravely. "He must look a little beggar to you. I beg to remark, however, Mr. Rowland, that you are not yourself very tall, nor perhaps of a commanding aspect, by nature."

Archie could not accept this jibe as Eddy would have done. He grew graver still than Rosamond and became crimson. "It's just a silly phrase," he said, "that means nothing. Eddy's far more commanding, as you say, than I am. I know the difference well enough: but it's a little hard all the same to think that a man's own father should take the word of a strange rather than—"

"Oh, do you think there's anything in that?" said Rosamond. "I don't: in the first place, if you must speak for yourself, you're a prejudiced witness, that's what they say. And again, you know a man's father—or a woman's father either, for that matter—does always believe other people sooner than you. It has something to do with the constitution of human nature, I suppose," she added with philosophical calm. "And then, perhaps, if you will allow me to say it, Eddy might know more than you."

"About myself?" said Archie.

"About other people. Eddy knows a great deal about some kinds of life. I don't say it is the best kinds. He knows the ways of a bad set. So that if it was anything wrong, he might be able to throw a light— It is a pity, but that is the turn he has taken," said Rosamond. "He seems to find scamps more amusing than others. Perhaps they are, for anything I know. I have thought myself, that if you didn't mind about being respectable and that sort of thing, which of course a girl must mind, that it might be perhaps more amusing. One never knows. Certainly society men are not amusing at all."

"I should have thought," said Archie, "you would have liked them best."

"No," said Rosamond dubiously, "the worst is, people are so hideously like each other. That's why one longs after what's disreputable or—anything out of the way. One hopes to light upon a new species somewhere. So far as I can see, however," she added, "Eddy's people are just as dull as the rest."

Archie was quite unable to keep up the ball of this conversation. It flustered and made him uncomfortable. He was very certain that whatever could be said for himself (and he did not think that much could be said for him), nobody would venture to assert that he was amusing.

"I should have thought," he said hesitating, "that a fellow you could trust to, that was of the kind that would never fail you whatever you wanted, and thought more of you a great deal than of himself, however awkward he might be, or uncouth, or that—"

"Oh," said Rosamond, "if it's moral qualities you are thinking of, the best thing perhaps to do would be to pick up the nearest curate and make a model of him." Which perplexed Archie more and more: for though he knew little of curates, he had been brought up with a wholesome respect for the minister, yet did not perhaps think that dignitary exactly the person "to please a damsel's eye." He expressed the difficulty he had in carrying on the conversation by a hesitating and puzzled "O-oh!" but said little more. And those young persons walked the rest of the way to Rosmore in partial silence, broken by an occasional monologue from Rosamond, who did not dislike a good listener. And there is no doubt that Archie was admirable in this way.

The rest of the party were less happy, for it must be said, that though the conversation did not flourish, there was to Archie, and possibly also, more or less sympathetically, to Rosamond, a sort of vague pleasure in moving along by the side of a person so interesting, which, though quite vague, was wonderfully seductive, and made the woodland roads into enchanted ways, and gave every moment wings. The lad found himself in a charmed atmosphere when he was by her side. During the tremendous internal conflict through which he had passed, he had thought of Rosamond, not according to her own formula, as amusing, but as the opposite extreme to that lowest kind of existence, the highest point of interest, variety and stimulation, which life contained. And now he had stepped at once from the depths to the height. He did not mind what it was she was saying, nor even that he could not reply to her. As he walked along by her side, Archie was buoyed up as by heavenly airs. He trod not on common earth, but on something elastic and inspiring that made every step light. And though Rosamond would have been greatly surprised had she been accused of any such feeling for Archie, yet perhaps the sympathy of the exquisite elation in his being affected her more than she knew. But, as has been said, the rest of the party were less happy. Marion sat with her back to the horses, partly from choice, in order to have the others more at her mercy, and partly in supposed deference to Rowland, who liked to have his face turned in the direction in which he was going, like many other energetic persons. She surveyed her father and his wife

as from an eminence, commanding every look and movement. There is not a better point of vantage than the front seat of a carriage when you mean to cross-examine and reduce to helplessness the people opposite to you, who cannot escape.

"I am very glad, papa," said Marion, "that you have got over your little tiff, and all come so nice and friendly home." I knew quite well that you and mamma would very soon make it up, but I was very anxious about Archie, who is a different question. And have you got any light about that cheque, or is it just the father falling on his neck, and the prodigal coming home?"

"The cheque?" said Rowland, in a low tone of astonishment, with an anxious glance at his wife.

"Oh, yes," said Marion, in her clear notes, "you need not speak low, papa, as if that would do any good: for everybody knows just quite well what it all was about."

"You seem to know more than I do, Marion," said Rowland; "therefore, perhaps, you will be good enough to expound the matter to those, who have given you the information, in your own way."

"Yes, papa," said Marion, with charming docility: "but I could do that better," she added, "if you would answer my question: for if it's just your kindness, like the man in the parable, that's one thing: but if it's cleared up, that's another—and I would like to know."

"I am sure it will please Marion, James," said Mrs. Rowland, "to be assured that it has been cleared up, and that both her hints to me and to you have been of use. I am not sure," she said, with a laugh, "that Eddy was very grateful to you for suggesting that he would know."

"Oh, you told him it was me!" said Marion. Her eyes, which were dancing in their sockets with curiosity and excitement, were clouded for a moment. "Well!" she said after a pause, "I'm not minding. It was quite true." She put her hand on Mrs. Rowland's knee, and leant forward eagerly. "Was it yon man?" she asked.

"What have you to do with it," cried her father, "you little—? You never lifted a finger for your brother, so far as I know."

"It would not have been becoming," said Marion, with dignity, "if I had put myself forward. And how did I know that you would have liked it, papa? I just was determined that I would not commit myself: for if he had never come back it would always have been a comfort to you that you had one that made no fuss. But when mamma consulted me, I gave her the best advice I could, and when you consulted me, I just told you what I thought. And it appears," said Marion, taking them in with an expressive glance, "that it has all been for the best."

"It has been entirely for the best," said Evelyn, "and you could not have done better for us if you had meant it." Mrs.

Rowland was but a woman, and she did not forgive her step-daughter for the suggestion which had caused her husband so many troubled hours. They drew up to the door at this moment to the general relief, but Evelyn could not refrain from a final arrow. "You will be glad to know that nobody has come to any harm," she said.

But Marion was not sensitive to that amiable dart. She clutched her stepmother's dress to hold her back. "Was it yon man?" she said, "and did he get clear away after all?"

Evelyn stepped quickly out of the carriage and made no reply; but, as it happened, Marion's unanswered question was of the greatest importance and advantage to the anxious household and deeply-interested country-side. For, dropping into Saunders' thirsty ears, like the proverbial water in the desert, it was by him shaped into the most satisfactory of conclusions to the much-debated story. "It was that fellow in the bad coat," he said, in the housekeeper's room as soon as he had superintended the taking in of tea. "I knew yon was the man." Saunders was a little breathless, being a portly person, and having hurried in at the top of his speed to convey the news. "I must say Miss Marion has a great consideration for us in the other part of the house," he added. "She asked the question just as I stood there, though I make no doubt she had 'ad it all out afore that.'" Mr. Saunders was a Scotsman by birth, but he had been in the best families, and slipped an *h* now and then just to show that he knew as well as any one how fine English was spoke.

And the news ran far and wide—to Rankin's cottage, and to the Manse, and up the loch to the innumerable neighbours who had taken the profoundest interest in the story. A great many people, it turned out, had seen "yon man." He had been observed on the loch-side walking back with an ulster that was much too big for him, covering his badly-made evening coat. And all the inhabitants of the little cluster of cottages in one of which he had lived, had given Johnson up as the malefactor long ago—for had he not come in from the ball in the middle of the night, and thrown his things into his bag, and struggled off again in the ulster which was not his, over the hill to Kilrossie before it was light? At the head of the loch there was the most unfeigned satisfaction that it had proved to be "yon man." And Archie was the subject of one prolonged ovation wherever he appeared. "I am as glad to see you back as if I had gotten a legacy," Miss Eliza said, patting him on the back. "When I thought of the noise we were all making that night of the ball, and you, poor lad, with such trouble hanging over you, and nobody to know! But it's all blown over now, and justice done, the Lord be praised." The reader, better informed, knows that poor Johnson had met with anything but justice, but the opinion of the loch had happily no effect upon his equanimity, and indeed, if it could have been supposed to have had any effect, no

doubt he deserved all the obloquy for something else, if not for that.

And it surprised nobody when Eddy Saumarez arrived one evening to finish his visit, as was said—that visit having been painfully cut short by the family trouble and false accusation of Archie, which his friend had been too sensitive to bear. Eddy had been a general favourite, and everybody was glad to see him, even Rankin, who received him very graciously, though with a flush upon his face, probably caused by too hot a fire. “I could accommodate you *now* with a puppy, if you were still in want of one,” Rankin said, fishing up a sprawling specimen of the Roy section from that nest in which he kept his nurslings warm; and he added, “I’m real glad to see you without *yon* spark. Ye’ll larn another time not to try to get your fun out o’ me with a ficeetious philosopher: for I wadna be worth my salt as a philologist, not to say an observer o’ human nature, if I didna see through an ill-spoken ignoramus like *yon*.”

“Everybody is not like you, Rankin,” said Eddy; “all the rest swallowed him like gospel.”

“It is true,” said Rankin, “that everybody is no like me. I have maybe had advantages that are not of a common kind; but ye shouldna abuse the confidence o’ the weaker vessels. And ye never can tell at what corner ye may fall in with a man that is enlightened and that will see through your devices—at least in this country. I’m tauld there’s far less advanced intelligence in Southland pairts. Ay, that’s a fine little beast. I havena had a better since the one that went to the Princess, ye will maybe have heard o’ that—a real beauty, but he wasna appreciated. I hope you have mair sense than ever to have such a thing said of *you*.”

Thus Eddy’s absolution was sealed by his very accuser, and his reputation vindicated.

The scene in Rowland’s study was perhaps more difficult to get through. It was in answer to a telegram sent from Glasgow that Eddy, with some excitement, made up his mind to return to Rosmore. “Come and finish visit. Have much to say to you,” was Rowland’s message, which set Eddy’s pulses beating. For a moment a horrible thought gleamed through his mind that his confession was to be used against him, but this he soon dismissed as impossible. It was bad enough without that, and demanded an amount of courage which Eddy, though full of that quality, scarcely felt that he possessed. He was dumb when he found himself at last in the dreaded room where Archie had suffered for his fault. Eddy was a trifler born, and had the habit of taking everything lightly; his most tragic moment came between two jests—he could not have been serious for five minutes to save his life. But when he was ushered into Rowland’s room, and found himself face to face with the man whose name he had forged, whose money he had appropriated, whose heart, tough and middle-aged as it was, he had nearly broken,

Eddy had not a word to say. He stood dumb before the judge who had voluntarily laid aside all power to punish him. Something rose in his throat which took away his voice. He could not have spoken had all the hopes of his life depended upon it. Happily this inability to articulate had more effect upon Rowland than the most voluble excuses could have had.

"Eddy," he said, "I've sent for you, thinking I had a right. I have a grievance against you, and then, again, I have received a favour at your hands."

Eddy made a gesture of deprecation, and tried to utter something, but could not.

"Yes," said Rowland, gravely; "I'm not a man to make little of what you did. But when you put your life in my wife's hands to save my son, you did me a greater service than any other man on earth could do: and you did in the circumstances all that a man could do."

"It's not capital now, sir," said Eddy, finding his voice as his spirit began to come back to him.

"No, it's not hanging," said Rowland, with a slight smile; "but it's ruin all the same. Now, look here." He took the cheque from the envelope in which he had put it away. "Put that in the fire, and destroy it, and then we can talk."

Eddy did what he was told with what scrupulous care it is unnecessary to describe, and poked the very films of the burned paper into the bottom of the fire. Then he turned to Mr. Rowland, his face reddened with the blaze, his eyes hot and scorched, his features working. He took the rich man's hand and held it fast between his. "Tell me to do anything in the world," he said, "whatever you please, and I'll do it. I am your bond-slave, and will not call my soul my own unless you say I may."

"Sit down, boy, and don't talk nonsense," said Rowland, himself considerably moved. "I am going to tell you to do several things, and I hope you will obey. But first, Eddy, if you wers in such a terrible scrape, why were you such a little fool, when you had a man like me close at hand, not to come and ask for it? Would not that have been the wise way?"

"It would have been a very cheeky thing to do to come and ask a man, because he's been kind to you, to give you a th—though, of course," Eddy interrupted himself, in a low voice, "less might have done then."

"A cheeky thing is better than a bad thing," said Rowland, sententiously. "Perhaps I might have been surprised: but now, my lad, let us get to the bottom of all this. If I take you in hand, I'll have no half measures. How much do you want to clear you altogether, so that you shall be your own master when you come into your estate?"

"To clear me?" Eddy's eyebrows went up altogether into his hair. "Well, sir," he said, "that is a confusing question, for you see, unlimited tick, that is to say, credit—"

"Don't be a humbug, Eddy!"

"Well, I suppose you know what tick means," the young man said, with a laugh, "not unlimited, by any means; though, to tell the truth, except for—I'm very nearly cleared."

"Very nearly won't do for me, neither will I have any exceptions; put them all down, every one, without any exceptions, and bring them to me. I'll see you cleared: and now for what I want you to do."

"Yes, sir," said Eddy, putting his hands by his side with the air of a docile little school-boy eager to obey.

It was all Rowland could do not to laugh, but he was scandalized at himself for his levity, and forbore.

"There is a choice of two or three things," said Rowland. "You might go out to my overseer in India, and try what you can do on the railways. There is nothing succeeds so well there as a man who knows how to manage men."

Eddy produced a little sickly smile, but he did not make any response.

"Or you might try ranching out in Canada or the Wild West: or the same kind of thing, though they only call it stock-keeping, in Australia: or—— It really does not matter what it is, if it's good hard work. I make a stand upon that. Good, hard work," said Mr. Rowland; "it's the way of salvation for you spend-thrift young men."

"Yes, sir," said Eddy again, with his school-boy air, but in rueful tones.

"Man alive!" cried Rowland, "can't you see what a grand thing it would be for you? your thoughts taken off all your follies and vanities, your hands full of something wholesome to do, yourself removed out of the way of temptation. What could you desire more?"

"Ah!" said Eddy, "I'm afraid I'd desire a different body and a different soul, only such trifles as these. I'm a product of corrupt civilization, I am not the thing that lives and thrives that way. Probably out there I should gravitate to a gambling saloon or a drinking bar."

"You don't drink, Eddy?" cried Rowland, with an alarmed countenance.

"No, I don't drink—not now," said Eddy, with sudden gravity; "but what I might do after six months of a cowboy's life I don't know."

Rowland looked at him for some time with a baffled air. Then he tried his last *coup*. "My wife told me," he said—"I hope she did not betray your confidence—that there was something about Marion."

A sudden flush of colour went over Eddy's face, and he began to move his foot nervously, as he did when he was excited.

"And that you had," Rowland said, with an inflection of laughter in his voice not to be concealed, "a very just appreciation of her. Now, my man, without some such probation there could be no thought of my daughter, you must know."

Eddy sat with his head bent, swinging his foot, and for a moment made no reply. At last he said, "How long, sir, do you mean the probation to last?"

"Let us say at a venture three years."

"Three years!" said Eddy, with comic despair. "Mr. Rowland, I am very fond of Marion, though—and I shouldn't wonder if she could fancy me. She has a poor opinion of me, but that needn't matter. We could always get on together. But do you think, from what you know, that if somebody with a handle to his name turned up after the Drawing-room, that Marion would wait for me out ranching in California for three years?"

In spite of himself, Rowland laughed. "I never could take upon myself to say, Eddy, what love might do."

"No?" said Eddy, with his head on one side, and a look of interrogation. "I think I could take it upon myself," he added. "We might be very fond of each other: and I, of course, would be out of the way of temptation out there; besides, I'm not the kind of man that falls much in love. But Marion: excuse me for talking so freely, sir, but you've put it to me. I should find Marion Lady Something-or-other, when I came back at the end of my three years."

"Then you don't think it worth your while?" Rowland said.

"I did not say that: whatever you say is worth the while. I'll go if you press it; and if I don't come back at all, it will be the less matter. But if you ask me, sir, frankly, I don't think it's good enough so far as Marion is concerned. She would never wait for a fellow out ranching. I don't see why she should, for my part."

"You are a cool loon," said Rowland, half offended. "Perhaps you do not wish she should."

"Well, she wouldn't like it," said Eddy. "I can't help thinking of her as well as of myself. She'd take the young Duke, if he turned up, in any case. There isn't an eligible young Duke, I believe, now," he said thoughtfully, "but the next best. And she wouldn't wait three years for me, oh no, though she might like me well enough. The three years' system would make an end of that. I am very much obliged to you for holding out the chance: and I'll take your advice for myself, Mr. Rowland, and go—wherever you decide. But we're bound to think what's best for her first, don't you see. And I couldn't give my consent to asking her to wait for three years. Dear me, no! not for me, as if I were a great catch or good for anything. It would scarcely be worth her while to stoop and pick me up if I were lying in her road. Why should she wait three years for me?"

"Eddy, you are a very queer fellow," said Rowland; "I don't know what to make of you. Tell me, now, if you were left entirely to yourself, what would you like to do?"

"I!" he said. Eddy swung his foot more and more, and sat reflecting for a minute or two. Then he burst into a laugh. "I suppose she enjoys her life as much as we do," he said, "poor old soul! I was going to say there's an old aunt of the governor's, that must die some time. If she would be so obliging as to do it now, and leave me her money, as she says she means to!—Then the governor would hand me over Gilston, which he hates, and Marion and I—— But it's all absurdity and a dream. The old aunt won't die, why should she? and we—why there's no we, that's the best of it! and we are discussing a thing that will never be."

Rowland walked about the room from end to end, as he sometimes did when he was forming a resolution. "So you think there's nothing but Gilston for you, Eddy?" he said.

"I should be out of harm's way," said the lad, "and a place to fill—it might answer, but again it might not. But why should my old aunt die to please me? or Marion give up her Duke—or you take all this trouble?—I am not worth it," Eddy said.

## CHAPTER XLVIII

"You put Mrs. Rowland on my traces," said Eddy; "why did you do so, you little witch? Wait till I find out some bad trick I can play you."

"It has all turned out very well," said Marion sedately. "I am not at all sorry I did it. I knew that man was about something wrong. And you should not know such people, Mr. Saumarez. I was bound to tell them anything I knew."

"Miss Rowland," said Eddy, "your father is going to pay all my debts, and send me out to California, or somewhere, to a ranch, to expiate all my sins; and when I come back in three years or so, as a reward, if you are not the Duchess of So-and-so, we may, if we please, marry."

"Who may marry?" said Marion astonished.

"The only people whom I know who really suit each other," said Eddy calmly. "You and I."

"You and—me," cried Marion in great wrath. "You are just very impudent to say so. Me marry you!—without ever being asked—without a word! In three years or so! I just tell you I will do nothing of the kind."

"That is exactly what I said. I said, if you think Marion will wait three years for me! She will take the first Duke that offers, and she will be one of the ornaments of Queen Victoria's court long before I come home."

"I was not saying exactly that," said Marion. "Where am I to get the Duke? There are none but old bald-headed men."

"An earl then," said Eddy. "There are always lively young Earls or Viscounts in hand, more to be counted on than plain Eddy Saumarez, who is nobody. That's what I said to your father, Miss May. Why should you wait for me? I told him I saw no reason."

"Especially when I was never asked," Marion said.

"Yes," said Eddy. "You see how good I am at bottom, after all that has happened. I said I would play you a nasty trick if I could find one, but I haven't. You should be grateful to me. I haven't asked you—so far as words go."

"I don't know," said Marion, with a little quiver in her lip, "how a person can be asked except in words."

"Don't you?" he said, and then they gave each other a look, and burst into mutual laughter, of the emotional kind.

They were walking down the slope of the bank towards the Clyde, under trees now bare with the surly winds of winter. It was a dull November afternoon, and everything was done in tints of gray; the skies in long bands, here darker, there lighter, as the vapours were more or less heavy, the opposite shore a tinge more solid than the long weltering line of the water which had the ghost of a reflection in it, the points standing out like black specks upon the gray, the wreaths of smoke half-suspended in the still air over the town of Clydeside, putting in an intermediate tone between the two. The edge of the great stream grew a little lighter as it crept to their feet over the shallows, and broke on the beach with a faint white line of foam.

"I will always maintain," said Eddy, "that there never were two people so fit to go together as you and I. We haven't any wild admiration of each other; we know each other's deficiencies exactly; we don't go in for perfection, do we? But we suit, my little May, we suit down to the ground. You would know what you had to expect in me, and I could keep you in order."

"You are just very impudent," she said. "I never gave you any encouragement, Mr. Saumarez, to think that I was willing to be—to do—I mean anything of that kind."

"Ah, Marion," he said, "you may be as stern as you like, but I know I would suit you better than that duke. You would get dreadfully tired of being called your grace, and having him, a stupid fellow, always stuck there opposite to you; but you would not get tired of me."

"How do you know that? I am often just very tired of you," said Marion. "You think too much of yourself. We would not agree, not for two days without a fight."

"That is just what I say. There would be no *gêne* between us, we know each other so well. Don't you think, after all, you would perhaps wait for me, Marion, supposing the duke did not come? I never could pretend to stand against him. Say you will, and I'll do what your father says, and go ranching: though

most likely I shall break my neck the first year, and then you will be free of your promise, May."

"Why should you go ranching, as you call it, and what does it mean?"

"That's what I don't know. It means riding about after cows, but why I can't tell you. I know nothing in the world about cows. I scarcely know one when I see it, but your father thinks it's the right thing. I'll go if you'll wait for me, May."

"And what would you do, Eddy," she said, stealing a little closer to him, "if you didn't go?"

"That's more than I can tell you. But I'll tell you what I'd do, May, if old Aunt Sarah would only die. I'd settle with the governor about Gilston, and we'd furbish it up and live there. In the spring we'd have a little turn in town, and in winter we'd hunt, and have the house full. We should be as jolly as the day's long, and nobody to interfere with us. And I promise you, you'd go out of the room before Mrs. James Rowland, though he is the great railway man. I could do that for you, Marion, though I couldn't make you Her Grace, you know."

"Oh, be quiet, Eddy! and if your Aunt Sarah doesn't die?"

"Ah, there you pose me, May. I must either go back where the bad boys go, to town, and sink or swim as I can, and farewell to my pretty Marion; or else I must go and ranch, or whatever you call it, as your father says."

"It is strange," said Marion very seriously, "that old people should make such a point of going on living, when there are young ones that want their money so very much—and when they know they have had their day."

"One may say it is inconsiderate," said Eddy with a twinkle in his eye, "but then the thing is, why should she take all that trouble for us? I am sure we would take none for her: and here we are just back again, Marion, where the four roads meet—Gilston or California, the ranch or the—devil: that's about what it is."

"You had, perhaps, better go to the ranch, Eddy."

"And you'll wait for me, May!"

"Perhaps," said the girl, with tears which were honest enough, in her eyes. "If I don't see somebody I like better," she added with a laugh.

"Most likely," said Eddy philosophically, "I shall break my neck the first year—and then you need not hold to your promise. But don't marry any one under the rank of a marquis, for my credit, if you love me, May."

"Oh, we'll see about that," Marion said.

It was after she had come in from this conversation, and had thought it all over in her own room, and made several calculations, that Marion walked very sedately down-stairs, and knocked at her father's door. She was slightly disconcerted when she saw that Mrs. Rowland was with him, but, having quite distinctly made up her mind what she was going to do, her con-

fusion was slight and soon passed away. She did not sit down, but stood by the writing-table at which he was seated, leaning her hand upon it, which was a token that she meant business, and did not intend to waste words.

"Can I speak a word to you, papa?"

"As many as you please," said Rowland. "Sit down, May ; but if you are coming to ask explanations—"

"Explanations?" she said with some surprise. "Oh, you will perhaps be meaning about Archie? There is no occasion. I was always very clear about that; and it was me that gave mamma the first hint, as she will perhaps mind. I was coming to speak to you, papa, about what may perhaps be my own affairs."

"Shall I go away, Marion, and leave you alone with your father?"

"Oh, no, there is no need. You will be better here : for sometimes there are times when a woman has more sense—I will not beat about the bush. Why is it, papa, that Mr. Saumarez has to go away?"

"Oh, he has been telling you, has he? And do you mean to wait for him, Marion?" said her father.

"That is a different question," said Marion, with a toss of her head, which was perhaps intended to toss away a little heat that had come to her cheeks. "I would like to know, in the first place just as his friend, papa, what end is going to be served by sending him away?"

"And what would your wisdom suggest instead?" said Mr. Rowland. "The end to be served is to take him away from ill friends and connections, and make him work—which is the best thing I know—"

"Work!" said Marion with a certain contempt; "and how would Eddy work that does not know the way? Work is maybe very grand, and I am not sure but I could do it myself if there was any need. And Archie might maybe do it. And perhaps it would do *him* good. But not Eddy; I've read in books about that: if the half of the men out there work, the other half just go all wrong. Boys are not all alike," said Marion, with a little wave of her hand, as if delivering a lecture on the subject; "the boys at the Burn have that in them that they can just never be quiet—they're on the hill or out in the boat, or wrestling and throwing things at each other, if there's nothing else to do. But Eddy is not of that kind. He would no more work out there than he would work here. He will go if you make him, though I can not tell why he should do what you say. But he will go just helpless, with no use of his hands, and he will fall into the first net that's spread for him. Oh, he's clever enough!" cried the girl, some angry moisture springing to her eyes; "he will see it is a net: but he will go into it all the same: for what is he to do? He has just about as much work in him as Roy and Dhu."

"Then he'd better disappear off the face of the earth!" cried Rowland angrily, "with other cumberers of the soil. A man like that has no right to live."

"His Maker would maybe know that best," retorted Marion undismayed; "and me, I'm willing to take him as he is. But I will not be a consenting party," the girl cried, raising her voice, "to sending any person away to his ruin. You think one way is just good for everybody all the same, as if we were not made dark and fair, and big and little, to show the difference! And I will not say I will wait for him, papa," Marion added more calmly, after a pause for breath. "For I might miss a very good match in the time, and never get such a chance again; and he might never come back, as I think most likely, and I would have nobody at all. So I will not promise, for it would be bad for us both,—both him and me."

"You little calculating cutty," cried her father; "is this what you call being in love with a man?"

"I never said a word on that subject," said Marion. "I said I was willing to take him as he is. And I suppose," she said, coming down suddenly from her oratorical platform to the calm tone of ordinary affairs, "I suppose you will be meaning to give me some kind of a fortune, more or less, when I'm married and go away."

"I suppose so—to get rid of you," said her father with a laugh.

"That was just what I meant," said Marion seriously; "then what would ail you, papa, to settle about Gilston, and just let him take up the way of nature there? He could do what was wanted there."

Rowland sprang from his seat in wrath and high indignation. "Preserve the game and shoot it in the season, and play your idiotic games all the summer—"

"No, papa," said Marion demurely, "we would be May and June in town.")

"And hunt in the winter, and play the fool all the year round—on my money, that I've worked hard for, every penny! I will see him—and you—far enough first!"

"Papa," said Marion, "I have been talking to Rosamond upon that subject, and she thinks that men like you are under a great delusion. For she says you are not an old man now, but just in your prime, and you're neither worn out nor a bit the worse. And she says she knows men that have worked far far harder and actually have worn themselves out, and never made any money at all. So that it's not hard work, as you suppose, but just that you're awfully clever, and have had tremendous luck. Oh, you can ask Rosamond what she means. It is not me; but that's my opinion too."

To imagine a man more bewildered than Rowland—thus assailed in his very stronghold by two "brats of girls," as he himself said, who could know nothing about the matter: yet

subtly flattered all the same by the statement that he was still in his prime and awfully clever, things which no man, especially when he is *sur le retour*, objects to hear—would have been impossible. He glared upon his little daughter, standing dauntless, purling forth her iconoclastic remarks, and then he gave a short laugh, or snort of angry contempt, and smote her lightly (yet enough to make her shake from head to foot) on the shoulder, and bade her stick to her own plea and her lad's, and let other people speak for themselves.

"Well," said Marion, "I will just call her in, for she is in the hall, and she will tell you herself: for I have said my say; and I hope you will think it over, and come to a better judgment, papa."

All this time Evelyn had been sitting silent by, supporting her head on her hand. But, truth to tell, it was not the self-denial of a supporter leaving her principal to fight for himself, but simple incompetence which silenced Evelyn. With her head bent down, she had been doing her best to master and conceal the laughter which was almost too much for her. Mrs. Rowland was for once on Marion's side; and the composure of the little girl's attack, and its radical character, startled the elder woman. When Rowland sat down again by her side, with that snort of dissipating and modified fury, she put her hand upon his arm, and raised her face to him for a moment. And the good man was more bewildered than ever to see the fun that was dancing in his wife's eyes.

"James!" said Evelyn, her laugh bursting forth in spite of her; "she had you there."

"The little witch!" cried the bewildered man. He began to laugh too, though he could scarcely have told why. And then Rowland raised his head to find quite a different figure standing in front of him in the same position which Marion had occupied a moment before, but half as tall again as Marion, with head held high, and a slim, long hand leant upon his table. She stood like Portia about to make her speech, a simile which, it need not be said, did not occur to Rowland, but to Evelyn by his side.

"You called me, Mr. Rowland," Rosamond said.

"You are to tell him," said Marion's voice behind, "what you said about work, Rosamond: for I'm only his own daughter, and he will not listen to it from me."

"You little cutty!" Rowland said again, under his breath.

"What did I say about work? it is the thing I wish for most," said Rosamond. "As soon as ever I am of age I am going in for it. My father and people won't let me now. I do not think they have any right to interfere, but they do. Mabel Leighton, who is my dearest friend, is going in for medicine; but I have no distinct turn, I am sorry to say. But we think that something is certain to turn up."

"So you are wanting to work, are you, Miss Rosamond? If

it had been your brother, it would have been more to the purpose: for women's work is but poorly paid. I never heard yet of one that made a fortune by her own exertions," Rowland said.

"A fortune?" said Rosamond. "No, we never thought of that. We thought we could live on very little, two girls together. And Mabel has something of her own, and we hoped that grandmamma, as she is all for work, might make me a small allowance if she saw that I was in earnest. Lodgings are not dear, if you don't insist upon a fashionable quarter, and as we shouldn't care for meat, or anything expensive in the way of living—"

"Eh?" said Rowland surprised. "And do you think, my dear, you could make money by saving off your meat?"

"Money! oh, we never thought of money, so long as we could get on, and work."

"And what would you work for, if I may inquire, if you had no thought of money?" Rowland asked, almost dumb in face of this enigma, which was beyond all his powers.

"I have said," she exclaimed with a little impatience, "that unfortunately I have no distinct vocation. Mabel is medical, luckily for her. She has no difficulty. But there is always as much work as one can set one's face to in the East End."

"But for what, for what? Give me an answer."

"I allow," said Rosamond, faltering slightly, "that it is a difficult question. To be of a little use, we hope: though people say that the results are not always so satisfactory as— But at all events," she added, more cheerfully, "it is WORK. And that must always be the best thing, whatever one may do."

Rowland sat listening to all this, aghast. The lines of his ruddy countenance grew limp, his lips fell a little apart. "I thought I was a great one for work," he said. But the words fell in a sort of apologetic manner from his lips, and he did not add anything about a change of opinion, which might have been supposed to be implied.

"Ah!" said Rosamond, "I know! in a different way: which chiefly means, I believe, getting other people to work for you, and directing them, and planning everything, and making money—like you, Mr. Rowland! who, in a few years, without hurting yourself in the least, have got so much money that you don't know what to do with it. One sees that in the world. I have heard of men—not like you, who are a great engineer and a genius, everybody says—but mere nobodies, with shops and things, people one would not like to touch—" Rosamond made a slight gesture of disgust, as if she had drawn the folds of her dress away from contact with some millionaire. "But that is not WORK," said the girl, throwing back her head. "I know people in society—well, perhaps not quite in society—who have gone on working for a whole lifetime, gentlemen, yes, and

women too, working from morning to night, and even have been successful, yet have never made money. So it is clear that work is not the thing to make a fortune by. But I am of opinion that it is the first thing in the world."

Rowland once more blew forth with a snort from his nostrils the angry breath. He felt sure there were arguments somewhere with which he could confound this silly girl, and show her that to work was to rise in the world, and make a fortune, and surround yourself with luxury, with the certainty of a mathematical axiom. But he could not find them: and he found himself instead saying in his mind, "If you have ordinary luck, if you don't play the fool," and so forth, evidently adding the conditional case from his own point of view. And the result was that he contented himself with that snort and a strong expression of his opinion that girls should marry, and look after their men's houses, and not trouble their heads about what was never intended for them.

He broke up the discussion after this, and led his wife forth by the arm, taking her off to look at the view—Clyde coming in softly on the beach, and all the world clad in those sober coats of gray. And standing there an hour after, when the talk might have been supposed to have evaporated, and the day was dying off into evening, he cried suddenly, "Where would I have been without work? Not here with my lady-wife upon the terrace at Rosmore!"

Evelyn did not say, what perhaps rose to her mind, "You might have been, with a great deal harder work, a respectable foreman in the foundry, as good a man, and as admirable an example of what labour and honest zeal can do." She did not say it, but her historian does for her. Mrs. Rowland only pressed her husband's arm, and said, "The young ones, perhaps, are not without reason too."

At all events, Mr. Rowland said no more of the ranch for Eddy, and in due time, when the young pair were old enough, they married, and settled at Gilston, which was relieved and rescued by Marion's money, and restored to its dignity as one of the finest places in the county, where, if they did not perhaps live happy ever after, they were at least a great deal better off than they deserved, and fulfilled all their own prophecies, and suited each other—down to the ground, as Eddy said. Old Aunt Sarah died in the course of time, and completed their prosperity. And there was not a livelier house in England, nor a couple who enjoyed their life more.

As for Archie, his complete development into a man, on a different level from his father, with other aims, and an ambition which grew slowly with his powers, cannot be here entered into. It would exceed the limits permitted in these pages, and might touch upon graver problems than are open to the historian of domestic life.

Rosamond has not yet married any more than he, and has

had full opportunities of testing the power of work and its results. Mabel Leighton, of course, was soon drawn off from that eccentric career, and is now a mother of children, much like what her own mother was before her. But the further history of those two, if it is ever written, will demand a new beginning and an extended page.

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